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Geneva 1966 - The Ongoing Task of Ecumenical Social Thought and Action

World Council of Churches

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THE QUARTERLY
OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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Editorial

Geneva 1966 – the ongoing task of ecumenical social thought and action

The year 1966 was a time of transition for the World Council of Churches, from the era of the first general secretary of the WCC, Willem A. Visser 't Hooft – who was also the founding editor of Ecumenical Review – to the tenure in Geneva of US church leader Eugene Carson Blake. At the WCC's central committee meeting in 2006 we honoured Dr Blake prior to the 100th anniversary of his birth on November 7, 1906. But even more attention was given to the 40th anniversary of the 1966 church and society conference in Geneva, attended by both Visser 't Hooft and Blake. The conference addressed the theme "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of our Time", but it is commonly recalled simply as "Geneva 1966" and as one of the key landmarks in the development of ecumenical social thought and common action.

Geneva 1966 – still relevant for today

The conference covered a broad field of ethical challenges that confronted the churches then, and which are still directly relevant to church and world. The four sections of the 1966 conference on church and society considered,

1. Economic development in a world perspective;

2. The nature and function of the state in a revolutionary age;

3. Structures of international co-operation in order to achieve peace in a pluralistic world society;

4. Family and community in changing societies.

The conference engaged in the first truly worldwide debate of these pressing issues with approximately equal numbers of participants coming from the principal regions of the world. Many were confronted for the first time in such an intense way, face-to-face with people from regions and cultures other than their own. They had to wrestle with differing perspectives reflecting the different realities of their contexts. The call for liberation from neo-colonialism and revolutionary change had never before been heard so clearly. Listening again – though only for seconds in a videotaped newscast of the period that was shown during our central committee meeting – to the recorded voice of Bola Ige, the Nigerian lawyer, I have vivid memories of this important phase of national liberation and nation-building across my continent of Africa. The memories that are closest to our hearts help to inform how we look at the political, economic, social and military maps of the present day and the power distribution they reflect.

At the conference in 1966 differences in viewpoint surfaced, especially in the following three areas:

1. The way of relating the biblical witness and theological traditions to rapidly changing social realities;

2. The call for involvement in social revolutions, implicitly linked to the use of violence, that came from a number of representatives from Latin America, Africa and Asia;

3. The different ecclesiologies that have an influence on the churches' positions on social issues.

Since 1966 these concerns have been placed squarely on the agenda of the ecumenical movement, and they continue to challenge us. The broadly accepted social ideal of the "responsible society" that had characterized ecumenical social thought and action for so many years was severely challenged at this conference. Dr Visser 't Hooft, in his opening speech, argued against abandoning this concept, pleading instead that participants adjust it to the complex realities of the emerging moment. However, this framework could no longer succeed in providing a bridge to link such different world realties.

Several attempts have been made since that time to carve out common ground, but none of them has achieved a widely understood coherence in the WCC's many activities in the fields of economic justice, environmental concerns, of science and technology, of life in family and community, and of human sexuality – those themes were all discussed in 1966, they have played important roles in our work over the intervening decades, and they remain on our agenda. However, as Dr Puleng Lenka-Bula of South Africa underlines in her article, Geneva 1966 also had its

shortcomings. The role of women, crucial for the issues at stake, did not receive appropriate attention then. And the fundamental challenge of the ecological crisis was not identified clearly as requiring profound changes in the economic and political spheres, touching as it does on life-styles, cultural assumptions and development paths of affluent societies.

A shared sense of responsibility and mutual accountability

Nevertheless, we have made progress over the years. A consultation on "Ecclesiology and Ethics" was able to say in 1997: "The ecumenical struggles of recent decades have had significant results. They have left important moral 'deposits': the relevance for the dignity of all persons as creatures of God, the affirmation of the fundamental equality of women and men, the 'option for the poor', the rejection of racial barriers, a strong 'no' to nuclear armaments, the pursuit of non-violent strategies to conflict resolution, and the imperative for a responsible stewardship of the environment – all these are ecumenical achievements, given by God as the churches have worked together on crucial ethical issues facing humanity and creation." (Ecclesiology and Ethics, Geneva: WCC 1997, p 28)

Today's continuing debate on the "AGAPE process" on economic globalization has shown that despite such common achievements, we still wrestle with the question of how to respond to the growing inequalities of the widening gap between rich and poor and the violent conflicts in this world. We have seen that we are struggling to engage in different means of social analysis, interpretation of the biblical witness, and theological entry points and pathways to address social issues, that are rooted in our respective traditions and reflect the histories and realities of our contexts.

How can we forge unity of purpose, a shared sense of responsibility and mutual accountability towards one another? Do we have the necessary will, courage and skills to turn the diversity of our experiences and social locations from a fact that separates us from one another into something that allows us to act together with a common goal yet individually in ways appropriate to our respective context?

In preparing for the 2006 central committee, I read again the background document on globalization that was included in the report of the WCC's 8th Assembly at Harare, Zimbabwe in 1998. I quote one paragraph of this document, which says: "Plurality and diversity within the ecumenical movement ... are no longer seen as an obstacle to the unity of the churches and a viable future for humankind. Diversity provides rich resources and options for viable solutions if the stories, experiences and traditions of others are recognized and individual Christians, ecumeni-

cal groups and churches search together for alternatives that affirm and sustain life on earth. The traditional concept of the catholicity of the church deserves renewed attention. The notion and praxis of catholicity can be understood as an early form of Christian response to the imperial form of unity that was shaped and represented by the Roman Empire. Such an alternative option to the imperial power is of relevance for the affirmation of the ecumenical dimension in the life of the churches in the context of globalization."

I am struck by this statement and its relevance today. And I have no doubt that Geneva 1966 was instrumental in pointing new directions toward a broader appreciation of diversity within our fellowship. I hope that the future work of the WCC central committee and the ecumenical movement as a whole will help us to embrace the wondrous variety among the world's Christians as a rich resource that will help us to respond appropriately to the different contexts from whence we come, and that this diversity shall not hinder, but rather strengthen, our common witness to the world.

SAMUEL KOBIA

Editor

Holding Different Perspectives Together

Forty years of ecumenical engagement for social and economic justice

Konrad Raiser

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There is agreement among interpreters of the history of the ecumenical movement that the Geneva Conference in 1966 marks a decisive point in the development of ecumenical social thought and initiated a change of perspective the implications of which have been at the centre of ecumenical discussion on social and economic justice in the decades since then. John C. Bennett, a central figure in the preparations for and a key participant in the Conference called it a 'climactic event': "It was the event that marked the greatest participation of the third world up to that time in the life of the ecumenical community. Also, it was the fulfilment of ...many years of work to bring into the centre of the activities of the World Council of Churches the commitment to social justice on a global basis".[1]

Among the five major emphases of the conference which John Bennett lifts up in his essay, two are of special importance for our present concerns. To quote Bennett once more: "Pervading the whole conference was the realization of the widening gap between rich and poor nations...There was on all sides a sense of urgency about the responsibility to bridge the gap, and it was strongly suggested that the main obstacle was the lack of political will and not knowledge about how it could be done." To this he adds, however, the further observation: "Probably the most interesting set of ideas that came to the fore in Geneva may be seen in the contrast between, on the one hand, the method and spirit of the first section with its careful and moderate discussion of experts about the means of gradual political and economic change and, on the other hand, talk about revo-

[1] John C. Bennett, The Geneva Conference of 1966 as a Climactic Event, in: *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 37/1, January 1985, p.26.

lution involving the displacing of those in power in many situations by illegal and probably violent means...I wonder if the churches had ever been exposed to as much talk about that form of revolution as was the case at Geneva."[2]

Much has been written about the tension between the reports of sections I and III in their approach to the issues of economic development and probably too much has been made of the talk about revolution which does not figure very prominently in the final reports. The fundamental difference between the reports arises from the fact that section I represented the confidence that economic development could be achieved with the help of available technical and structural means whereas section III saw the need for fundamental changes of the existing political and economic order – at least in certain situations. While the report wanted to refrain from giving any generally valid overall prescription "for the ways in which changes in the organization of political and economic power in developing nations should occur" it did feel that at least two generalizations could be made "about the approach of Christians to the reorganization of the structures of power in the 'Third World'. One is that wherever small *élites* rule at the expense of the welfare of the majority, political change towards achieving a more just order as quickly as possible should be actively promoted and supported by Christians. The second is that, in cases where such changes are needed, the use by Christians of revolutionary methods – by which is meant violent overthrow of an existing political order – cannot be excluded *a priori.*"[3]

The message of the conference devotes a whole paragraph to this tension. It says: "As Christians, we are committed to working for the transformation of society. In the past, we have usually done this through quiet efforts at social renewal, working in and through the established institutions according to their rules. Today, a significant number of those who are dedicated to the service of Christ and their neighbour assume a more radical or revolutionary position. They do not deny the value of tradition nor of social order, but they are searching for a new strategy by which to bring about basic changes in society without too much delay. It is possible that the tension between these two positions will have an important place in the life of the Christian community for some time to come. At the present moment, it is important for us to recognize that this radical position has a solid foundation in Christian tradition and should have its rightful place in the life of the Church and in the ongoing discussion of social responsibility."[4]

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[2] John Bennett, loc.cit. p.28f.

[3] World Conference on Church and Society. Official Report. Geneva 1967, 142f.

[4] Official Report, lo.cit. p.49.

Developments in ecumenical social thought and action during these last four decades have certainly borne out the validity of the prediction that this tension would continue to make itself felt in the life of the churches and of the ecumenical movement for some time to come. Its manifestation at the time of the Geneva conference was only the first chapter of an ongoing debate about the appropriate forms of ecumenical witness for social and economic justice.

During the first two decades following the Amsterdam assembly in 1948 the concept of the "responsible society" had served as the essential social-ethical criterion in guiding ecumenical social thought and action. In his chapter on "Ecumenical Social Thought" in the 3rd volume of the "History of the Ecumenical Movement" Lewis Mudge draws attention to the fact that the tension at the Geneva conference found expression also in a critical assessment of this basic concept. Speakers and participants from developing countries, especially from Latin America, felt that the concept "failed to grasp the character of revolutionary social change and tended to support the status quo ... In the decolonization process, for example, 'responsibility' is taken to connote the maintenance of political and economic relations between European powers and their former colonies. What had formerly meant something like 'good governance' now was being taken to mean stability at all cost. It seemed to fail to appreciate the need for structural changes to foster economic justice. This critique set in motion a long-term movement from concern for policy formation at the top to solidarity with the poor and oppressed which has marked the last three decades."

This fundamental change of perspective which began to articulate itself at the Geneva conference and the opposition it provoked, especially among member churches and ecumenical partners in the North, have become a constant feature of the ecumenical debate on issues of social, political, economic and racial justice during these past four decades. The most dramatic context in which the controversy was acted out was, of course, the struggle against racism and in particular the support given by the WCC to liberation movements in Southern Africa through the Special Fund. It was in this connection that the question of revolutionary violence that was first raised at the Geneva conference emerged again as a highly contentious issue. In hindsight, the positions and actions of the WCC at the time are taken as the outstanding example for the 'prophetic role' of the ecumenical movement, even by many of those who were among the critics of the WCC during the controversy.

The experience of the struggle against racism and especially against the Apartheid system in South Africa might help us to place the supposed radicalism of some of the positions articulated by the ecumenical movement in the

field of the struggles for justice and liberation in a broader historical perspective. They should be seen as part of a dialectical process of transformation which does not follow a straight line towards achieving a clearly defined goal, but moves forward through challenge and response. There have been, and there will probably be in the future, moments when the tension between the perspectives seems to reach breaking point and the mutual commitment of the churches in the ecumenical fellowship is put to the test. However, the ecumenical movement has learned to live with this tension without trying to resolve it once and for all. It has learned to hold the different perspectives together, to respect that there is no blueprint for a just society, and to acknowledge that there is more than one valid analysis of the situation and that the forms of Christian social responsibility depend to a large extent on the conditions of the respective context. Thus, the Geneva conference did not attempt to resolve the tension which had emerged quite dramatically but affirmed in its message that the "radical position" had a solid foundation in Christian tradition and should have its rightful place in the ongoing discussion.

After this brief reflection on the immediate lessons learnt from the event of the Geneva conference, let us look at some of the instances where the same tension has come to the fore in the context of ecumenical initiatives regarding economic development and social justice.

The Uppsala Assembly of the WCC in 1968, following two years after the Geneva conference, took place at a time when the failures of the first development decade could no longer be overlooked. It realized that institutional and structural changes would be needed in order to advance the process of development and it appealed to the prophetic role of the churches to bring this change about. And yet, the assembly held on to the vision that it would be possible to extend the fundamental achievements of the welfare state reached in Western societies to the world level. In this way the assembly was able to generate a remarkable response among many of the member churches in the North who did accept the Christian responsibility for world development as an integral part of their ecumenical commitment. It was this assembly which launched the "radical" proposal that the churches should set aside 2 per cent of their regular income for the purposes of development.

In subsequent discussion the perspective from the South, represented especially by the Indian economist Samuel Parmar, won the upper hand. He questioned the traditional welfare approach and argued that, while economic growth constituted an important objective of development, it had to be placed within the basic framework of social justice. He asserted: "To attain the goal of social justice, it becomes necessary to change the social framework…In

other words, a radical restructuring of society is an essential prerequisite for achieving social justice."[5]

Parmar's understanding of development as a process of radical change towards social justice through self-reliance and economic growth became the policy basis for the activities of the newly formed Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD) during the 20 years of its operation. This position was based on a very clear economic and political analysis of the situation in developing countries, especially in India. While it challenged the assumptions underlying the approaches shared by most Western welfare economists, it could claim academic credentials by following the lines of institutional economics as represented by the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal who received the Nobel prize for economics a few years later. Parmar subsequently became, together with a group of other "unorthodox" economists, the main adviser and source of inspiration for the WCC's policies in the work on economic justice.

In the further discussion the emphasis on self-reliance was sharpened with the insistence on "people's participation" as a requirement for any genuine process of development, which led to the theological and ethical affirmation that the churches are challenged to accept the call for solidarity with the poor in their struggle for liberation. This became the starting point for a study on "The Church and the Poor" after the Nairobi assembly (1975).[6] What is significant in this discussion is the shift from addressing the issue of "poverty" which was and still is characteristic of the international development discourse to identifying the "poor" themselves as the subjects of the process of development interpreted as liberation. As Richard Dickinson points out, the conviction had grown, "that the remedy for poverty was not top-down reforms but changes of structure emanating from among the poor, acting as agents of their own emancipation. What had emerged is an implicit tension between those who emphasize changing international structural relationships (e.g. debt policies, transnational corporations' policies) and those who stress the need for people's movements to define and fight for their own destiny. To some extent these two analyses and strategies, which are both competitive and complementary, are reflected in the language of 'poverty' and the 'poor'."[7]

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[5] *Fetters of Injustice*. Report of an Ecumenical Consultation on Development. Edited by Pamela Gruber. Geneva 1970, p.54.

[6] The study which was coordinated by Julio de Santa Ana has produced three volumes: J. de Santa Ana, *Good News to the Poor*, Geneva 1977; J. de Santa Ana (ed.), *Separation without Hope?*, Geneva 1978; J. de Santa Ana (ed.), *Towards a Church of the Poor*, Geneva 1979.

[7] Richard D.N. Dickinson, Art. 'Poverty', in: *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. by N. Losky et.al., 2nd ed., Geneva 2002, p.917.

The tension to which Dickinson refers came to the fore when the final report of the study on the "Church and the Poor" was submitted to the Central Committee in 1980 under the title "Towards a Church in Solidarity with the Poor".[8] Dickinson recalls some of the questions that were asked: "Who are the poor? Which poor? Do the poor really have wisdom about the direction society should take and what methods are the best to get there? Are Christians to endorse every strategy adopted by the poor? What is the relationship between poverty and righteousness? Is the church to abandon the rich and middle class?"[9] The whole process is an example for the way in which the ecumenical discussion allows open controversy to be acted out trusting that only by probing into sometimes uncomfortable questions new insight can be generated leading beyond accepted positions.

Another example of how new insights have begun to crystallize as a result of controversial discussion is the emergence of the concept of a "just, participatory and sustainable society" as a new framework for ecumenical social thought and action at the time of the Nairobi assembly (1975). A Church and Society consultation at Bucharest in 1974 had proposed the concept of a "just and sustainable society" as an ethical guideline for the churches. The Nairobi assembly, combining this new emphasis with the concern for people's participation in development, suggested as one of the major programme emphases the theme "towards a just, participatory and sustainable society" (JPSS). It was hoped that it would be possible to bring the two conflicting perspectives on ecological sustainability which reflected urgent concerns in the North and on people's participation as a Southern priority together in a comprehensive understanding of justice which calls both for sustainability and participation. The concept of a "just, participatory and sustainable society" was considered suitable to take the place of the earlier socio-ethical guideline of the "responsible society".

The report of an Advisory Committee on JPSS which drew on the resources and insights from diverse sections within the WCC did not find favour with the Central Committee at its meeting in 1979, mainly because of disagreements about the theological framework adopted by the advisory group. However, the proposal to crystallize all ecumenical efforts regarding social justice around this comprehensive concept stimulated the creation of an Advisory Group on Economic Matters (AGEM) which worked from 1979 until 1992 to spell out the implications of this guideline for economic analysis and policy formation. Drawing on the insights generated in the course of ecumenical discussion and

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[8] *Towards a Church in Solidarity with the Poor*. CCPD/WCC, February 1980.

[9] Richard D.N. Dickinson, Art. Development', in: *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, loc.cit. p.301.

the experiences gained in the churches' participation in development the group proposed an outline for a new "political economy" and applied this framework of criteria to the search for a new International Economic Order, to the issues of technology, transnational corporations and human development, to world hunger, to the international financial system, and finally the problems of labour, employment and unemployment.[10] Never before or afterwards has the WCC facilitated such a committed and creative interdisciplinary process of reflection and dialogue among economists, sociologists, political scientists and theologians. The reports of the group demonstrate that ecumenical discussion on economic justice has continued to participate in and contribute to the ongoing process of critical review of concepts and theories among academic experts in the respective disciplines. Based on the work of the AGEM and benefiting from its input the comprehensive study document "Christian Faith and World Economy Today" was prepared and received with appreciation by the Central Committee in 1992.[11]

One final example for the way in which the underlying tension of perspectives has manifested itself concerns the ecumenical process of action and reflection regarding transnational corporations (TNCs). Time does not permit to review in detail the process which was concluded with an international consultation at Bad Boll in 1981 and a report presented to the Central Committee in 1982. However, in many ways, this discussion prefigured the recent assessment of the economic globalization and the search for alternatives. While the Central Committee accepted the report and commended it to the churches for study and action, it is not surprising that critical views were expressed in the discussion both in Central Committee and even more strongly among some of the churches. It was felt that the "judgemental approach" of the report would make dialogue with TNCs difficult, "among whose management were committed Christians with a strong sense of social responsibility"; that the issue was very controversial in the churches and would therefore require more careful analysis and discussion. But it was also stated that TNCs were beyond national control and that international organizations like the WCC had an important responsibility in this field.[12]

We have followed the conflicting perspectives that surfaced at the Geneva conference in 1966 through the subsequent ecumenical discussion on basic issues of social and economic justice. The main focus was the development debate

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[10] *Ecumenical Reflections on Political Economy*, compiled by Catherine Mulholland, WCC/Geneva 1988.

[11] *Christian Faith and World Economy Today*. A Study Document from the World Council of Churches. WCC/Geneva 1992.

[12] ibid. p.26f.

especially since the Uppsala assembly. Again and again we encountered similar tensions which in most instances placed representatives from churches in Southern, developing countries over against those from Northern und Western industrialized countries. The controversy was not limited to questions of appropriate strategies for development, but it included fundamental differences of political and economic analysis and extended to the interpretation of the nature of Christian social and ethical responsibility and of the role of the church. While both sides in this continuing controversy have learned from each other and have moved forward to new insights, the conflict has not been resolved and the experience of the AGAPE process on economic globalization prior to and at the assembly in Porto Alegre indicates that the ecumenical movement is still facing the same challenges.

What then is the relevance of this diagnosis for the continuing ecumenical process of work on issues of economic justice? A first conclusion that can be drawn is to acknowledge that we are dealing with a conflict that reflects differences of social location, of power and access to power, and thus of interest among the churches. The controversy between radical or critical and more balanced or pragmatic positions is not simply a matter of voluntarist choice or ideological orientation. Rather, the gap between rich and poor with all its implications concerns the churches together with the societies of which they are part. We live in a divided world and the churches share in this division. Depending on our social and historical location we have a different perspective on social reality. Our respective interpretations of reality are often in conflict with each other and cannot be reduced to one normative view of reality. At the same time, we live in an increasingly interdependent world and cannot escape from the fact that interpretations and actions from one perspective have direct or indirect consequences for those in other locations. The process of globalization has increased rather than reduced this conflictual division which manifests itself most sharply with regard to issues of social justice.

As Christians and churches we are called to live as a community of sharing and mutuality, and to manifest in our relationships "the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). From this perspective the gap between rich and poor and our participation in it as churches is a scandal which challenges us to search for ways of transforming our conflictual relationships. However, we can learn from the discussion during these four decades that the biblical imperative of "agape" cannot be translated directly into strategies responding to our contemporary social and economic conflicts. It was the wisdom of the pioneers of ecumenical social thought and action that through the concept of the "responsible society" they were able to mediate between the biblical imperative of agape and the demands of responding to concrete social challenges and

the ambiguities of social, political and economic analysis. As Christians we are called to act; we cannot wait until we have reached complete agreement in terms of analysis or with regard to the theological, ethical and ecclesiological implications. We have to respect the difference of ecclesial and ethical traditions as well as the fact that there are different approaches to social, political and economic analysis. This is the second lesson to be drawn from the controversies of ecumenical discussion on social and economic justice.

Against this background, it is all the more significant that again and again it has been possible in the ecumenical movement to agree on basic criteria for the task of mediation between the biblical and theological imperatives on the one hand and the diversity of interpretations of social reality. When it began to be recognized that the earlier concept of the "responsible society" could no longer serve this purpose effectively, new mediating concepts or "middle axioms" were proposed and tested out, e.g. "a just, participatory and sustainable society", or later "justice, peace and the integrity of creation", and, even more recently the notion of "God's economy or household of life". None of these mediating concepts has so far won the wide acceptance that the earlier perspective of the "responsible society" had. However, the example of the Advisory Group on Economic Matters suggests that agreement on such a guiding concept, even in a provisional way, is a necessary prerequisite for the effort to formulate criteria for social and economic policy making.

A valuable set of criteria is presented in the study document on "Christian Faith and World Economy Today" which were also included in the AGAPE document for the assembly at Porto Alegre. Further discussion and reflection might be needed to sharpen these criteria, but experience would suggest that on this basis agreement can be reached relatively easily on proposals for action, irrespective of the continuing differences of perspective and interpretation. It would also appear that at Porto Alegre there was in fact a relatively broad agreement on the commitments to action included in the AGAPE call (with the exception of the final one on the "Churches and the power of empire") while misgivings were expressed by some about the analytical parts of the AGAPE document and its theological and ethical approach.

Quite apart from the fact that such a framework will facilitate common action and advocacy in response to the challenges of economic justice under the conditions of globalization, it will also open up space for the kind of continuing critical dialogue with religious, political and economic actors for which the report of the Programme Guidelines Committee of the assembly at Porto Alegre has called. At a time when this kind of policy orientated dialogue is becoming more and more difficult or even breaking down altogether in the broader sec-

ular context, it may be the special vocation of the WCC together with its ecumenical partners to create the space and the conditions for the dialogue between conflicting perspectives and interests to continue. Twenty-five years ago the WCC successfully used the instrument of a public hearing to seek clarity in the difficult discussion about the challenge of nuclear disarmament. Whatever the form, such dialogue might be able to generate new insights and policy proposals which cut through the antagonisms in the international debate.

The Approach to Development of the Geneva 1966 Conference

Pamela K. Brubaker

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The World Conference on Church and Society: Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time (Geneva, 1966) was the third ecumenical conference called to address "the questions of Church and Society". Unlike the first two – Stockholm, 1925 and Oxford, 1937, Geneva 1966 included a significant representation (almost half) from the churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The majority of representatives at Geneva were from the laity. However, only twenty-seven of the 337 delegates were women. The work of the conference was divided among four sections: 1) economic and social development; 2) nature and function of the state; 3) international cooperation; and 4) "man and society".

W.A. Visser 't Hooft, WCC general secretary, gave the conference its charge in his opening address. The ethical criterion of the responsible society, adopted in 1948 at the First WCC assembly in Amsterdam as the goal for which the churches should work, needed to be "renewed and reinterpreted in view of the need for a responsible world community and the demands for international economic justice." The Amsterdam assembly declared that,

> A responsible society is one where freedom is the freedom of men who acknowledge responsibility to justice and public order, and where those who hold political authority or economic power are responsible for its exercise to God and the people whose welfare is affected by it.[1]

The notion of the responsible society required "that power be made responsible to law and tradition, and be distributed as widely as possible throughout the whole community" and that "economic justice and the provision of equality of opportunity be established for all members of society." The assembly

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[1] Visser't Hooft, W.A. ed. *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches :Official Report.* London : SCM Press, Ltd. 1949, p.77.

rejected the ideologies of both laissez-faire capitalism and communism. Christians are to seek "new creative solutions which never allow either justice or freedom to destroy the other."[2]

Several interpreters of ecumenical social ethics assert that the Geneva conference broke new ground, as Visser 't Hooft hoped. However, Richard Dickinson thinks that the idea of the responsible society, which had served as a coalescing vision for approximately 15 years, was "one casualty of the Geneva conference". He suggests the term "fell into disuse in part" because it seemed to emphasize political as distinguished from economic factors, while the 1960s was a period of rediscovery of the vital influence of national and international barriers to justice and development.[3]

Robert McAfee Brown observes that it became apparent during this conference that "the real struggle" going on in the world then was not between east and west, nor communism versus capitalism, but north vs. south, rich vs. poor, white vs. coloured."[4] Marvin Ellison notes the receptivity of the conference,

> to recasting the problems of development in terms of the dependency of the Third World upon the affluent North and that concessions were made about the need for radical, even revolutionary changes to take place within and among nations...."[5]

However, Paul Abrecht asserts that although the challenge and appeal of revolutionary ideas is acknowledged, the conference "did not itself endorse general revolutionary action". The radicalism of Geneva, he contends, was pragmatic – not ideological.[6] An exploration of the conference's report will help the reader make his or her own judgments about the conference.

I. Development defined.

The 1960s were the first "Development Decade" of the United Nations. Dickinson observes that

> The churches, too, searched for innovative and more effective ways to promote development, though they tended to absorb and accept the dominant development concepts

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Dickinson, Richard, *Poor, Yet Making Many Rich : The Poor as Agents of Creative Justice.* Geneva : WCC/CCPD, 1983, p.47.

[4] Brown, Robert McAfee. *Theology in a New Key : Responding to Liberation Themes.* Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1978, p.39.

[5] Ellison, Marvin. *The Center Cannot Hold : The Search for a Global Economy of Justice.* Washington : University Press America, 1983, p.73.

[6] Abrecht, Paul. "From Oxford to Vancouver; Lessons from Fifty Years of Ecumenical Work for Economic and Social Justice." *The Ecumenical Review 40,* 1988, pp.156-157.

> of the time, oriented very much towards economic growth and industrialization through capitalization.[7]

The conference definition of economic development, from the report of Section I – "Economic Development in a World Perspective," illustrates his point:

> Economic development is essentially a process of change whose fundamental aim is to improve the living conditions of all the people in a country. Such change is brought about by measures to increase productivity, usually through increased investment, sustained over a period of time.[8]

It does, though, link development to social justice, in asserting that "From the Christian viewpoint, this change is part of the effort to create a truly just social order."[9]

The report observes that changes in technology and economic organization are bringing numerous social and personal consequences, including growth in economic productivity. While these advances are welcomed as "a gift from God", the report cautions that "left uncontrolled they accentuate the existing unbalance between rich and poor countries (and indeed within them), which is a scandal and offence to God and men."[10] (Clearly, this caution was prophetic: in 1980, the richest thirty countries, income was 17 times that of the poorest 30 countries; in 2002 it was 27 to 1. The income of the richest 10 % of persons was 103 times that of the poorest 10 % .)

The conference charged Christian theology with the task of expounding and defending "the human" as a criterion for judging economic and social changes. Thus, technology must serve human purposes,

> The task of the Christian is to conserve what is truly human in the present, but alert to the many existing injustices, to seek to realize fuller possibilities of human life through the processes of economic growth and social change.[11]

The churches are to "welcome economic growth because it helps to free men from unnecessary want and economic insecurity". However, they are warned against uncritical enthusiasm about economic growth. The organization of work and its fruits are not ends in themselves, but should be seen as a means to the end of the well-being of "the whole man" and the ability to help others. Furthermore,

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[7] Dickinson, p.46.

[8] Abrecht, Paul and Thomas, M.M., eds. *World Conference on Church and Society : Official Report.* Geneva : WCC, 1967, p.66.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., pp.52-53.

[11] Ibid.

> an economy cannot be judged only by its overall rate of growth. All richer countries have to work out a balance of policies relating to full employment and the distribution of income among individuals, among regions, and among rich and poor countries.[12]

The report of the section on "economic development in a world perspective" is divided into parts on "advanced countries", "developing countries", and "world economic relations". The discussion of "advanced countries" concludes that since market economies, welfare states with mixed economies, and centrally planned economies are all capable of rapid economic growth and wide distribution of income, Christians should "be critical participants in the societies in which they find themselves."[13] This seems to be a crucial statement, one that implies ideological "neutrality" – at least on economic systems. However, there are policies for which Christians in any economic system must advocate,

> income and price policies which will avoid the disaster of inflation, distribute the nation's resources fairly, and do justice to those who are unable to contribute to production and thus earn income in a market economy.[14]

A similar perspective prevails in the part on "developing countries", which claims that there is no single universal pattern of economic development. (The definition of economic development cited earlier in this paper, opens this part of the report.) Although a complex phenomenon, economic development depends on three basic factors: "motivations, resources, and institutions".

> The basic problem of economic development is to determine how these forces operate, how they can be modified in order that the objectives of the society may be achieved, and what new interactions of these forces occur as economic development takes place. Not all of these interactions may be conducive to sustained economic growth.[15]

In some countries economic development might demand "revolutionary change in the structure of property, income, investment, expenditure, education" and political organization and "in the pattern of international relations."[16]

The report then discusses the complexities and challenges involved in bringing about such change. In regard to international relations, it charges that "many internal institutional reforms cannot be effective unless changes are made in

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[12] Ibid., pp.53-55.
[13] Ibid., p.57,
[14] Ibid., p.62.
[15] Ibid., p.66.
[16] Ibid.

the international policies and institutions which affect the economies of developing nations." These include trade and economic policies of "more developed nations" and agreements for stable commodity prices, export quotas, etc. "The problem is to create the political will to make the changes which will diminish the gap between the have-more and the have-less nations."[17]

This part on developing countries concludes that "the particular pattern of growth that a country should adopt depends upon its environment, the values of its people, its social goals, and the types of institutions it has or can develop." Ironically, given the resurgence of neo-liberalism in the 1980s, it claimed that,

> the polemical discussion regarding the relative merits of two extreme positions – unregulated free enterprise and completely controlled central planning – has now largely ended, and a general consensus in favour of some degree of mixed economy has emerged.[18]

This affirmation of mixed economies seems to contradict an earlier endorsement of the ability of all three economic systems under discussion – market, mixed and centrally planned – to generate growth and distribute income.[19] It also ignores the challenge presented earlier in the report,

> Does not the "mixed economy" fail to achieve the advantages of either of the extremes? ... how can governments both press firms to compete in the private sector and also stress the need for coordinated investment plans and programmes of rationalization and standardization of production? Does not the whole system tend to produce rigidity and a jerky pattern of growth?[20]

Probably these seemingly contradictory perspectives are indicative of "fissures and tensions" among the conference participants, a topic examined later in this paper.

Global economic relations were of particular concern, and are the subject of the next part of the report on economic development. It begins by claiming that technological progress brings the possibility "of eradicating want and misery from the face of the earth". Noting the increase in international inequality, it declares that economic and social policies which fail to slow this tendency "must be radically altered".

> It is not enough to say that the world cannot continue to live half developed and half undeveloped: this situation must not be allowed to continue. Therefore, all nations,

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[17] Ibid., p.77.
[18] Ibid., p.78.
[19] Ibid., p.57.
[20] Ibid., p.59.

> particularly those endowed with great economic power, must move beyond self-interest and see their responsibility in a world perspective.

It then turns to the churches, charging that "The Church must say clearly and unequivocally that there is a moral imperative behind international economic development."[21]

The report contends that inequalities between nations emerged from past acceptance of a so-called natural division between poor agricultural and rich industrialized nations. It rightly challenges this assumption.[22] The report then discusses the complexities and challenges of aid, trade, debt, and foreign investment. The most interesting statement is in regard to foreign capital investment, "The fundamental problem is that the goal of a businessman – to make profits – sometimes conflicts with the goal of governments – to increase the social product and to distribute it equitably."[23]

The report calls for the articulation of "an international development standard". This includes, in the short run, a "vast increase" in the quantity of development aid – at least two percent of GNP is proposed,[24] its quality – grants instead of loans, and opening of markets to the products of developing countries. In the long run, it calls for regional trade groups, a World Economic Plan, and recognition that the ultimate aim of the restructuring of world economic relations is "an international division of labour based on the specific contribution of fully equipped nations that trade with each other as equals."[25]

The primary role of the churches is education – theological, economic, political, and social. The churches are challenged "to speak with a genuinely prophetic voice", to proclaim that "God has created and redeemed the whole world. This implies a more just distribution not only of wealth but also of health, education, security, housing and opportunity."[26]

II. Women and development.

As in previous meetings, discussion of economic issues is largely silent about women's economic reality. The only mention of women in the report on eco-

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[21] Ibid., p.80.
[22] Ibid., p.81.
[23] Ibid., p.83.
[24] Ibid., p.210.
[25] Ibid., p.86.
[26] Ibid., p.89.

nomic and social development is in a statement of concern that "the widespread employment of married women may conflict with the requirements of family life."[27] The pattern in World Council meetings (to this time) of addressing the "woman question" separately from social and economic issues is repeated; this time the discussion is in the section focusing on "Man and Community in Changing Societies". This group did not necessarily think employment of married women was a problem, and claimed that there is no one normative role for either women or men.[28]

Their analysis of the changing relations between women and men noted changes in women's economic reality:

> In former times, the woman as wife and mother carried out the burden of household responsibilities, protected by her family. Today the old image which associated women with sexual relationship and marriage remains, but in an urban industrial society she frequently works outside the home, and the dependent status gives way to an as yet undefined position of codependence or interdependence.[29]

This section also addressed women's unpaid work, noting that "the economic value of the work of women both at home and in the assistance given to men and husbands in other fields has not been recognized or included in the assessment of the economic product of a country." It cites a long history of women working alongside men in agrarian societies. In these situations, detecting and correcting imbalances is necessary rather than inaugurating "non-domestic employment" for women.[30]

Both society and the family might benefit "from the passing of the historic masculine culture which tended to downgrade woman's capacities". The analysis, though, focuses more on family strain than on women's lives. New conditions combined with old mores cause such strain. In some developing countries, men are educated while their wives are not, thus inviting "discord and divorce". When women work outside the home, while men are not always encouraged to do household tasks, "wives' work" is doubled.[31]

Responsible parenthood, a euphemism for family planning, is endorsed as "an integral part of the social ethic of the day".[32] Both the welfare of families and the need to balance population growth with economic and human resources

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[27] Ibid., p.65.

[28] Ibid., p.163.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., p.164.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p.168.

justify this need.[33] The health of the mother, as well as the health of the child, motivate the spacing and number of children optimally a family might choose to have. The plight of "unmarried mothers" is also discussed, particularly the prejudice and exploitation from which they suffer. The delegates urge that with the support of family, friends and government, single mothers "be helped to constitute a family with the children they maintain by their work".[34]

Equality and participation are highlighted as norms "preconditional" for responsible relations between women and men. The section conceded, though, that the church has not always embodied these norms but has helped "perpetuate unjust types of subordination of women". The churches should:

> Press for the establishment by government of laws to ensure that men and women have equal right to work, status, and pay, and provide ways and means for women to participate more fully in their life and work.[35]

This charge to the churches to more fully involve women in their life and work prefigures a trend in which the WCC gives "a higher priority" to the participation of women in its own organizational life.

III. Critical assessment.

This overview of the approach of the Geneva conference certainly supports the claim of interpreters that it broke new ground in ecumenical social ethics. Not only did development become a crucial concern,[36] but as Julio de Santa Ana noted, Geneva 1966 highlighted the need for structural change in the achievement of development. Also, women's economic issues, such as the double day and the undercounting of women's work, were included for the first time in ecumenical social statements.

However, when we look not just at analysis, but strategic proposals, Abrecht's assertion that the conference "did not itself endorse general revolutionary action" seems apt.[37] As Marvin Ellison contends, although there are conces-

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[33] Note: The section on economic development also addressed these issues. It declared that "there is an urgent need for the rapid dissemination of birth control information and techniques." The following paragraph noted, though, that not all member churches of the WCC agree on family planning and birth control. It concluded that "The Church must insist on the sanctity of marriage and the right of each couple to makes its own decisions in accordance with its church's teachings on marriage and individual responsibility." Abrecht and Thomas, p.72.

[34] Ibid., p.170.

[35] Ibid., p.177.

[36] Parmar, S.L. "Issues in the Development Debate," Richard Dickinson, *To Set at Liberty the Oppressed: Towards an Understanding of Christian Responsibilities for Development/Liberation.* Geneva: WCC, 1975, pp.164-185.

[37] Abrecht, Paul. pp.156-157.

sions to the need for radical changes, the conference's strategic recommendations give more emphasis "to persuading those in powerful positions to enlist in a cooperative venture" for global development than they did to endorsing people's movements for liberation and self-reliance.[38]

This appeal to cooperation is indicative of the liberal presuppositions which informed the criterion of the responsible society and the philosophy of development based on it. Assumptions about economic life in liberal social theory are grounded in neo-classical economic theory, which posits market exchange – the buying and selling of commodities and labour – as the central human economic activity. In general, this theory contends that market exchange is an efficient and fair distribution of resources and goods.[39]

Neo-classical economics, with its focus on market exchange and economic growth, marginalizes non-market activities of care and social reproduction – primarily assigned to women. Although uncounted, these activities are essential to personal and social well-being; they undergird economic growth although often harmed by it. The Geneva conference noted this lack of counting, but like most other development models of the time that focus on increasing productivity and investment, it did not integrate these activities into its proposals. Likewise, there was no acknowledgement of the environmental devastation caused by growth, also "outside the market", nor any awareness of ecological limits to growth.

Rebecca Todd Peters makes a useful distinction between neoliberalism, which has confidence in the market's self-correcting capacity, and what she calls social equity liberalism (similar to the welfare-state), which "recognize a certain responsibility on the part of government to protect and care for the most marginalized members of society." In contrast to neoliberalism, which values individualism, prosperity, and freedom, this perspective values responsibility, progress, and equity.[40] In my judgment, social equity liberalism is an accurate representation of the Geneva 1966 approach to development.

The Uppsala assembly in 1968 endorsed most of the conclusions of the Geneva Church and Society Conference. Richard Dickinson observed that although this assembly,

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[38] Ellison, Marvin. *The Center Cannot Hold : The Search for a Global Economy of Justice.* Washington : University Press America, 1983, p.74.

[39] Brubaker, Pamela K. *Women Don't Count : The Challenge of Women's Poverty to Christian Ethics.* Atlanta : Scholars Press, 1994, p.60.

[40] Peters, Rebecca Todd, *In Search of the Good Life : The Ethics of Globalization.* New York and London : Continuum, 2004, pp.64,70.

> glossed over some of the deeper tensions and fissures which were manifest at Geneva, it did succeed in taking a strong and unifying moral position about the outrageous disparities between rich and poor in the world, and called for responses which moved beyond charitable concern towards structural changes.[41]

However, there is some evidence of fissures in the report on assembly discussion. S. L. Parmar, an Indian economist, challenged the notion of development through co-operation. One has to search the historical record diligently, he claims, to find instances where possessing classes willingly gave up their privileges (a point also made by Martin Luther King, Jr.). The "have nots" have "to wrest their rights through agrarian movements, worker movements, trade-union activity and so on". He pointed out that the welfare state fails to assure "the full welfare" of minorities in North America or immigrant workers in Western Europe. Parmar asked if "a projection of this two-group welfare state would lead to anything except "a projection of the elements of inequality and injustice it contains."[42]

Parmar's concerns are echoed by several interpreters of ecumenical ethics, who criticize the emerging development philosophy of this period for its idealism. In 1970, Arent Theodor van Leeuwen observed that the "essential weakness" of this philosophy is that "it deals with the economic issues of world development without the political context of international power relations." A lofty Christian idealism results, one which "hardly touches the hard facts of a revolutionary world".[43]

This liberal idealism informed the discussion on women, as "the hard facts" of their lives are rarely touched either. The public/private dichotomy of liberal theory, which separates the family from the public arena and restricts women to the domestic arena, and the sacralization of the family,[44] prevented an in-depth analysis of the discrimination and oppression many women face in all areas of life.

Beatriz Melano Couch also noted "the liberal idealism" of the WCC and its unwillingness "to advocate a political rupture with the sources of oppression."[45] Ellison contends that the Council evinced a "pervasive reluctance to

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[41] Dickinson, p.47.

[42] Goodall, Norman, ed. *The Uppsala Report 1968.* Geneva : WCC, 1968, p.42.

[43] Ibid., p.112.

[44] Note: Sacralization of the family in the ecumenical ethics of this period is illustrated in the assertion of the WCC Department on Cooperation of Men and Women that "the family is the privileged community to which is given the grace of conjugal love, the mystery of unity wherein the physical bonds and the spiritual bonds reinforce each other in order perfectly to fulfill the command of the Saviour: 'Love one another.'" (Madeleine Barot, *Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society*, Geneva: WCC, 1964, p.8.).

[45] Goodall, Norman. p.204.

question an ecumenical philosophy based on a presumed harmony of interests and goals among classes and nations..."[46]

IV. Looking ahead.

However, the "the real struggle" between "north vs. south, rich vs. poor, white vs. coloured struggle" that became apparent at Geneva 1966[47] could not be "glossed over", as happened at Uppsala 1968.[48] The fissures and tensions at Geneva pointed to an emerging shift in ecumenical social ethics from liberal presuppositions about social change to more radical ones, endorsed at Nairobi 1975. This shift included a move from appeals to the powerful to bring about change to support for people's movements for change. Understandings of justice shifted from a liberal concern for distributive justice to a more radical understanding of justice as social justice, which stresses participation. There also was a move from primary use of neoclassical economic models – market oriented, with an emphasis on private initiative and ownership, to "radical political economic models – participatory planning and social control of productive sectors."[49] [50]

The ecumenical concept of development was expanded at the Consultation on Development Projects (Montreux 1970) to "an inter-related process of economic growth, social justice and self-reliance, the last being of greatest importance."[51] Nairobi 1975 endorses this understanding, and challenges liberal models of development, based on the logic of the "free market". It noted that "'Growth' in an economic order based on the so-called 'free market' system" has been shown to have "a built-in exploitative tendency where resources are unevenly distributed".[52] In a companion volume for the Nairobi Assembly, Aaron Tolen charged that

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[46] Ibid., p.77.

[47] Brown, Robert McAfee. *Theodogy in a New Key : Responding to Liberation Themes.* Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1978, p.39.

[48] Dickinson, p.47.

[49] Note: My use of the term radical draws on the work of U.S. political economists like David Gordon, *Problems in Political Economy*, Lexington, MA: Heath and Company, 1977, Howard Wachel, "Looking at Poverty from Radical, Conservative, and Liberal Perspectives," *Poverty and Economic Justice: A Philosophical Approach*, ed. Robert H. Hartman, New York: Paulist Press, 1994, pp. 200-13, and ethicist Beverly W. Harrison, "The Role of Social Theory in Religious Social Ethics," *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, Carol Robb, ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985. This approach is similar to the postcolonial approach described by Peters in her chapter, "Globalization as Neocolonialism: The Struggle of People's Movements for Global Solidarity" (Peters, pp.139-170).

[50] Brubaker, p.155.

[51] Santa Ana, Julio de. "What development demands: a Latin American position," Dickinson, *To Set at Liberty,* (op. cit.) pp.139-152.

[52] Paton, David M., ed. *Breaking Barriers : Nairobi 1975.* Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdamns, 1976, pp.122-123.

> until the purpose of economic activity returns to being its real one of assisting people to satisfy their needs, and until the prevailing law ceases to be that of maximum profits (of whom? for whom?), exploitation will continue to be justified because it is undoubtedly the most efficient system for obtaining maximum profit.[53]

However, as evident in the AGAPE process, these matters are still subject to debate. There is not much support for the neoliberal policies of the U.S. and Great Britain, the IMF, World Bank and the WTO. There are those, particularly some in the northern churches, who advocate for social equity liberalism. Challenges to this approach come primarily from churches in southern countries. The struggle which emerged at Geneva 1966 is not yet settled. The stakes, though, are higher than ever as care, social reproduction, and "the web of life" suffer grievous assaults from forces of militarized globalization and empire. It is imperative that we act together for an economy of life so that the *oikoumene* – God's household of life – may flourish.

[53] Ibid., p.158.

Committed to the Transformation of the World?

Where are we 40 years after the World Conference on Church and Society in Geneva (1966)?

Lukas Vischer

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Geneva 1966, Achievements and Limitations

"As Christians we are committed to working for the transformation of the world".[1] This programmatic sentence appears in a prominent place in the message of the Conference. The gathering was called because it had become clear that a far-reaching transformation of society was taking place. Historical developments had already led to new conditions of life and it was clear that further changes were bound to occur. History was rapidly moving ahead. The sub-title of the Conference is characteristic: *Christians in the technological and social revolutions of our time.*

The Conference was to formulate a Christian response to the new situation. It had to identify and register the developments which had taken place. But its task was also to show what role the churches had to play in this ongoing process of transformation. A clear analysis was expected, but more was hoped for. The Conference was supposed to issue an appeal to the churches and, if at all possible, to launch a movement of involvement in the present historical processes. The message of the Conference called then for more effective and vigorous action.[2] The churches were to recognize the role they have to play in the changes of our time – with its chances and open possibilities, and ensure that the further course of history would lead to a just and equitable society.

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[1] *World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, July 12-26, 1966, Official Report*, ed. M.M. Thomas and Pauil Abrecht, Geneva 1967, *Message* §6, p.48.

[2] Official Report, *Message* §9, p.50.

The political situation at the time was dominated by the East-West conflict. Two ideologies or more precisely two political and military superpowers were competing with one another. The worst period of confrontation was over. The concept of peaceful co-existence had been launched. But the fear of a third world war, conducted with nuclear arms, was still alive. The issue of nuclear armaments was therefore inevitably on the agenda of the Conference. One of the resolutions speaks of "a passing moment of grace which needed to be seized".[3] The World Council of Churches was, however, determined not to allow the prevailing political constellation to dominate the debate. The discussion of other urgent issues and challenges was not to be prevented. For some years the WCC had been engaged in a study process on "rapid social change". The issue of social justice had come to the fore. How can the technological progress achieved in recent decades be so shaped and directed that the younger, now independent nations do not fall into new forms of dependence? Their hopes and claims had found vivid expression in the study process. This extended preparatory work enabled the World Council of Churches to break out of stereotype debates on the political confrontation between the superpowers and to engage in more comprehensive reflections on the transformation of society.

The Conference was preceded by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Here also an attempt had been made to deal with the changes in society. The conviction was that the witness of the Church could only reach contemporary people, if an *aggiornamento* of the Church could be operated. Outdated structures of worship and ecclesiastical organization needed to be replaced. The Church was not to understand itself in the first place as an institution but had to meet the world as a living communion. The Church had to bear its witness in the world and, as the Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the World expresses it, share its joy and hope as well as its problems and anxieties. Pope John XXIII had created the atmosphere which was required for the undertaking. The short Encyclical letter *Pacem in terris* had freed minds to face the challenges of the time. The agenda of the Church was not to be determined by the conflict of the ideologies and super-powers. The Church was to work independently for a comprehensive peace. The Pastoral Constitution developed this programme in a measured and carefully formulated way.

The Geneva conference was no doubt much more turbulent than the Second Vatican Council. The reports reflect the sharpness of the debate. Some critics described the Conference as chaotic. Paul Ramsey was of the opinion that the

[3] Official Report, p.125.

WCC would be well advised to follow in future the model of the Second Vatican Council.[4] To a certain degree the criticism was no doubt legitimate. The reports contain rash judgments and above all an abundance of resolutions and recommendations. But the criticism misses the essential point. The explosive character of the Conference was, in fact, one of its qualities. Through this it became a mirror of the contemporary world, a signal and an appeal to face, and cope with, the big problems which appeared on the horizon.

The Conference was borne by the hope that a new and more just social order could be achieved. Historical developments pressed forward. New horizons opened. The majority of the participants had an almost undivided confidence in the progress of science and technology. A new stage of human history seemed to be within reach. A few quotations may illustrate this:

> The conference discussions stressed the many and increasingly rapid advances in technology and economic organisation which will continue to produce fundamental economic change in all countries whatever their ideological or political forms. These advances lead to a growth of economic productivity and are to be welcomed as a gift from God who gives new powers to men and requires their use for the common good.[5]

> The churches should welcome the development of science and technology as an expression of God's creative work. They also should welcome the economic growth and social development which it makes possible, because this helps to free men everywhere from unnecessary work and material insecurity; it also makes it possible for the relatively few richer nations of the world to assist the poorer countries in their enormous task of moving along on the road of self-sustained development.[6]

"Our age is the first which can aspire to freedom from the tyranny of physical nature," claimed one of the main speakers, Emmanuel G. Mesthene, executive director of the Programme on Technology and Society at Harvard University.[7] The question is now what use humanity makes of these new possibilities. The Conference was not naïve in this regard. It was conscious of the fact that new discoveries are not as a matter of course wisely used. It reckoned with conflicts and resistance. But it was on the whole convinced that the obstacles could be overcome. Though evidently going through turbulent waters, the goal could be reached. A responsible society? So far the goal of the ecumenical movement had been described by this formula. Was it still valid? Many had doubts. The formula sounded too simple to do justice to the tasks ahead. A new order had

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[4] Paul Ramsey, *Who speaks for the Church ?*, Abingdon Press, Nashville and New York, 1967, p.14.

[5] Official Report, p.52.

[6] Official Report, p.90.

[7] Official Report, p.14.

to be brought about. Some conference participants went to demonstrate in front of the building of the United Nations in Geneva. On one of the posters, one could read the slogan: *Nuevas estructuras para un nuevo mondo!* Action was needed now. The Conference was seen as a moment of decision.

> We have become increasingly aware of the plight of the developing nations which comprise more than two thirds of the world's population and yet have access to only one fourth of the world's resources. We also realize that if the present trend towards widening the gap between the rich and poor nations is not arrested and reverted, the very peace and stability of the world will be threatened. [8]

"If not – the consequence will be": such formulations provided the backdrop for passionate appeals. The mood was militant and full of hope. What had to be achieved went beyond the teaching held so far by the churches.

> In the past we have usually witnessed through quiet efforts at social renewal, working in and through the established institutions according to their rules. Today, a significant number of those who are dedicated to the service of Christ and their neighbour assume a more radical or revolutionary position. They do not deny the value of tradition nor of social order, but they are searching for a new strategy by which to bring about basic changes in society without too much delay ... at the present moment it is important for us to recognize that this radical position has a solid foundation in Christian tradition.[9]

But, in retrospect, it must also be said that the Conference failed to do justice to the contemporary situation. It took only a few years to realize that its analysis of the transformation of society was, to say the least, incomplete. The power of the forces which had been released by scientific and technological progress was far more complex than the Conference assumed. It clearly underestimated the magnitude of the challenges and tasks humanity was facing. The role it attributed to the Church exceeded by far its real spiritual and material capacities. After a short while the analysis already needed to be revised. Today many of the answers given by the 1966 Conference appear rather naïve and unrealistic.

It is significant, I think, that the key sentence of the Geneva Conference was modified by the Porto Alegre assembly (2006) into a prayer addressed to God. God, in *your* grace transform the world. The formulation is the expression of a new perception of Christian witness. But has the language used by the World Council of Churches changed accordingly? In many reports and statements

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[8] Official Report, p.209.

[9] Official Report, p.49.

issued in recent years the 1966 language continues to be used. The changes, though again and again identified, have not really been integrated into the general discourse of the ecumenical movement.

The Second Vatican Council had also engaged in an effort to "read the signs of the time". But when we read the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* today, we come to the conclusion that the Roman Catholic analysis also remains incomplete and in some respects even erroneous. The style of the Second Vatican Council, so highly praised by Paul Ramsey, proved, in fact, to be unfortunate. Because of the authority attributed to a Council by the Roman Catholic Church the errors of perception persisted much longer than in the World Council of Churches. While in the ecumenical movement the debate soon moved ahead, the Roman Catholic Church remained fixed on the texts which had been solemnly promulgated.

1966 – Today : Seven Contrasts

What are the changes which have taken place? It is impossible to offer a complete analysis, but let me offer seven illustrations:

1. *Human beings and nature:* Already after a few years it was clear that the impact of the scientific and technological revolutions was greater by far than the 1966 Conference had realized. The potential for destruction inherent in them exceeded the risks and dangers which were then seen. Already in the sixties they constituted in reality a threat for the whole of life on planet earth. Nature was in the eyes of the Conference hardly mote than the arena of human action. Both the resources and the capacity of the earth was taken to be inexhaustible. Science increasingly began to realize that there were limits to the exploitation of the planet. In 1973 the analysis of the Club of Rome, "Limits to Growth", was published, a first, in fact still rather harmless, alarm signal. In the following years the threats to the climate, loss of biodiversity, scarcity of water and many other forms of deterioration of the environment entered public consciousness. Increasingly, human activities proved to be problematic. The WCC engaged in new considerations. At a conference on Church and Society in Budapest in 1974 the concept of sustainability was discussed for the first time, and a year later the WCC assembly in Nairobi, following a passionate speech by Charles Birch, declared that the struggle for social justice needed to be coupled with a resolute commitment to sustainability. A comprehensive correction of the prevailing orientation of the WCC was proposed by a further conference in 1979 in the MIT in Boston. The theme now read: *Faith and Science in an unjust world.* The magnitude of the crisis was now more realistically per-

ceived. The human conquest of the planet has to reckon with limits. Despite all the progress achieved, human beings remain bound by the given framework of God's creation. The consequence is clear. If they are to survive on this planet, they have to reduce their claims on nature and its resources.

The Boston conference did not get much attention – even within the WCC its conclusions were only reluctantly received and not really given further thought. The commitment to sustainability remained in the background. But year by year the signs of environmental destruction multiplied. The changes caused by science and technology led to an ever deeper self-contradiction. The crisis sharpened but it proved difficult, if not impossible, to change the basic orientation of society.

2. *Social Justice: new requirements.* The Geneva conference had a relatively simple conception of social justice. Equality between rich and poor nations can be achieved by associating the poorer nations to the general economic growth of humanity. Economic growth and social justice were seen as twins. The realization of justice requires, however, far-reaching structural adjustments. A new order will not come about by itself. It requires struggle. One year later (1967) the papal encyclical *Populorum progressio* introduced the slogan: development is the new word for peace. The Conference could not have made this slogan its own. Social justice implies struggle. The underprivileged nations have to fight for their claims and rights, and the churches have to take sides in this fight.

In a lecture delivered one year after the 1966 conference, Samuel Parmar (1921-1979), one of the masterminds of the World Council of Churches in the sixties and seventies, described the inevitability of this struggle in the following terms:

> If we accept the *technological* revolution which we obviously do without any reserve, it is not logical to reject the *social* revolution which can create structures subjecting technology to the benefit of humanity ... Since the technological revolution is the product of the social conditions of the West, it is for the Non-Western world hard to understand why the fathers of this revolution are so reticent to accept the need for the social revolution in other parts of the world.[10]

As the ecological crisis entered people's consciousness, this concept of justice had to be modified. The expectation that the gap between rich and poor nations could be closed or bridged by economic growth proved to be less and

[10] Samuel L. Parmar, *Entwicklung mit menschlichem Gesicht*, Gesammelte Vorträge und Aufsätze, Texte des kirchlichen Entwicklungsdienstes 17, Frankfurt am Main 1979, p.23.

less likely. Social justice had to be achieved within the limits of growth, and this meant that the rich nations had to drastically reduce their demands. In his speech to the Nairobi Assembly (1975) Charles Birch expressed this insight by the succinct phrase: "The rich must live more simply so that the poor may simply live." The industrial nations were no longer seen as pioneer nations paving the way for the poorer parts of humanity, but as consumer and polluter nations which through their extravagant life-style created ever new social injustice. True, it might be possible through new scientific and technological discoveries to shift the limits to a certain extent. Technological efficiency may diminish the overexploitation and pollution of the planet. But all these improvements would not suffice to maintain the present life standards of the Western nations, and even less to extend it to the entirety of nations. A just social order worldwide is only possible if the industrial nations are prepared to adopt a radically new orientation.

Samuel Parmar concludes a lecture on the "Limits to Growth" (1974) with a reflection on the need for the countries of the Third World to opt for an independent approach to development:

> Most of our countries have opted for the values and ways of industrial nations. Our experience over the past two decades shows that these have not solved our problems but may even have aggravated them. We must recognize that in a relative sense, that is, in comparison to developed nations, and in terms of the prevailing economic yardsticks we will continue to be poor. Should we not develop a different yardstick of measuring progress? The quest for self-reliance is much more than an economic concern. It is an attempt to find dignity and meaning within the material limitations which will remain.[11]

Today, social justice is in peril more than ever. Economic growth continues to be the absolute priority of all nations. The costs caused by exploitation and pollution are systematically ignored. Measures to protect the environment invariably meet with resistance. Changes to climatic conditions, induced by human activity, are not taken seriously by the industrial nations. The way rich nations deal with poverty in the world has hardened. Self-interest dominates. The call for a comprehensive order of social justice is no longer on the agenda.

3. *Technological Progress.* On the whole, the Geneva conference had an optimistic view of technological progress. True, the negative consequences of the technological revolutions were not overlooked. But technological progress was not considered to be inevitable but capable of opening new horizons for

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[11] Samuel Parmar, *Social Guidelines and Limits to Growth*, Anticipation 18, 1974, p.22. In German: *Sozialethik und ‚Grenzen des Wachstums'*, in: Entwicklung mit menschlichem Gesicht, p.67.

humanity. "It frees man from magic, from material servitude, from endemic diseases and hunger, and ... frees us for new possibilities in leisure, for satisfaction and fulfillment of self, for new forms of creativity." The question was how humanity was to deal with the new capacities and possibilities offered by science. "Whether the effects of technology are good or bad, depends on the goals presupposed." The particular task of the Church consisted in guiding progress in a sound direction. "Where the Church sees technological change as a gift of God for the liberation of mankind, its vocation is to welcome, not resist, this new challenge in human history":[12]

> Economic growth has expanded enormously the horizons of the human family. The increase in educational and cultural opportunities, the networks of mass communication and transportation, and the extension of voluntary and government social services have enriched the lives of men beyond the wildest dreams of earlier generations. *To this personal and social fulfilment Christians must say a loud amen, for human creativity is a gift from the Creator.* [13]

This *amen* has in the meantime become much more reserved. While the Geneva conference was convinced that technological progress would secure a better future, the ambivalence of technology became clearer in subsequent decades. Technology cannot be applied without circumspection. It has its own independent power. Though the fruit of human activity, it follows its own laws and constantly creates *faits accomplis*. The power it offers will be misused and is the cause of irreparable destruction. Good and bad use of technology are in conflict. The dangers enumerated already by the Geneva conference as possible "side effects", have become bitter reality:

> new vocational diseases, air and water pollution, mental disturbances, psychic tensions, and disruptions in the life of the community, dislocation and at least temporary unemployment caused by automation, large scale migration and increasing slum-dwelling which intensifies continuing social evils such as alcoholism, drug addiction and prostitution.

The analysis of the Boston conference (1979) was much more differentiated. Instead of speaking in a general way of the blessings of technology, the conference scutinized dangers inherent in technology. What are the risks accompanying technological progress? How can society avoid losing control of technology and its potential effects. The Boston conference was characterized by a certain degree of helplessness. It made an impassioned call for restraint. Technological innovation should not be introduced over the heads of the

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[12] Official Report, p.154-55.

[13] Official Report, p.64.

people. Before applying new means the readiness of the population and the level of acceptance needed to be tested.

Science and technology have further progressed in the last four decades and caused new revolutions. New discoveries have changed the patterns of society even before earlier changes have been fully absorbed. New developments have taken place in the fields of electronics, computer science, genetic engineering, the cloning of living beings and many other areas. The number of challenges has multiplied since the Geneva conference and has at the same time become less and less manageable for ordinary people. There are not many today who would speak of technological progress so plainly as a gift of God. The expectations have drastically diminished.

In the eighties the World Health Organization, for instance, still confidently promoted the slogan *Health for all by the year 2000*. The expectation was that the combined forces of medical research, technology and good will would achieve new degrees of health. Already in those years, but today to an even greater extent, humanity is not only confronted with new diseases such as AIDS, but also with the return of illnesses which seemed to have been overcome.

4. ***Community.*** The Geneva conference was aware of the potential impact of technological progress on the traditional forms of community. Bonds of community are called into question, new forms needed to be found. "The new technology is demanding new patterns of community and is rapidly secularizing the social order." Technological innovation inevitably calls for a re-construction of society. The Geneva conference urged the churches to participate actively in this transition. Its responsibility primarily consists in assisting those who are affected by the effects of change. "The Church must recognize the price paid for change in human suffering, disorientation and the disruption of cherished forms and traditions, and stand with those who are the victims of change."[14] But this is only one side of the task. The Church is to contribute to the building up of a new society. It has to recall the fundamental presuppositions for true communion and seek to realize new forms of community in its own midst.

> A better type of community should emerge, *aided by planning*, in which man may have a sense of identity, loyalty and belonging so necessary for him as roots for living. This new community should be informed not only by charity but also by justice.[15]

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[14] Official Report p.154.

[15] Official Report, p.158.

The society of the future will be secular in character. The Geneva conference was of the opinion that this development was to be welcomed. It creates the basis for mutual recognition. The "secular city" does not mean the end of the public role of the Church, it opens on the contrary new perspectives. As one of the many components of society the Church can more freely bear witness to the essence of its message and recall its validity for the whole of society.

> Secularization provides the possibility of choices among alternatives, a world in which there is more than one answer to any given problem, because the diffusion of vocation and responsibility creates openness and the possibility of change ... The secular society is not founded on a religious base which cannot be challenged but rather religious institutions and ideas are one among many components of the social structure. This means freedom. Uncertainty and risk are necessary results of freedom.[16]

How far are these expectations still relevant? In the course of the last four decades the churches have indefatigably worked for the maintenance and renewal of the human community. The building up of living communities is one of the central tasks of the Church. New Christian movements have come into existence offering a new home to many people. Christians play a significant role in non-governmental organizations which pursue goals neglected by society. The churches play no doubt a significant role in creating a sense of community.

The process of disintegration caused by the technological revolutions has, however, not been halted. The developments have on the contrary led in almost all parts of the world to uprooting and increased instability.

At the same time the limits of the concept of the secular city have become manifest. It is true that the secular society offers to all its members freedom and the opportunity to develop their own self, but it does not provide the moral ground for developing a society of solidarity. Almost everywhere today the forces that are required to build up a responsible society are missing. Moreover, the secular city is far from neutral but represents secretly a form of creed. And the values underlying this creed can have disastrous consequences.

This danger was recognized by the Geneva conference:

> In that secular society man's choices are no longer obligatory and prescribed. Each man is free to seek his own faith and make his own assumptions about the purpose of being. This brings the risk that modern man, having freed himself from magical, religious or ideological views of the world, may consciously or unconsciously begin to absolutize other aspects of secular life such as nationalism, the profit motive, rationalism, social

[16] Official Report, p.158.

> planning or other new "Molochs". This becomes secularism in which an absolutized assumption of the secularized world begins to play a determining role comparable to that of religion in the sacred society.[17]

Religious convictions, seen by the conference as a relic of a magical understanding of the world, actually remained highly relevant for the building up of society. Society does not simply consist of individuals, but only survives as a community of communities. Communities are needed as the ground from which the sense of solidarity and public responsibility can grow.

5. *Towards a responsible international community.* The risks connected with nuclear armaments were omnipresent at the conference. How can mutual destruction be prevented? How can an international order be established through which the conflict between the superpowers will be neutralized? The Geneva conference had no illusions in this regard. A "responsible society" at the international level was not in sight:

> The churches should be under no illusions with regard to the state of the world. There is no world government nor can we foresee one. The nuclear nations exercise their power uncontrolled by any international agency, and at the same time the international ethos of the nuclear age is still highly ambiguous.[18]

The Conference gave its support to the United Nations and expressed its conviction that the institution needed to be strengthened. Despite the weaknesses and failures it needed to be defended, and not paralyzed by the conflict of the superpowers. It was therefore essential that all nations are represented in its midst and participate in its activities. Logically, the Conference asked for the admission of the People's Republic of China into UN membership.[19]

The United Nations are not only indispensable as an instrument to ensure peace but also as a framework for the promotion of mutual understanding and social justice. The Conference hoped for a wide acceptance of binding agreements among the nations, in particular the Covenants on Human Rights.[20] Only by submitting to the increasing authority of the community of nations and participating in the promotion of real peace, could humanity hope to survive.

The Conference therefore underlined the political role of the developing nations. It accused the former colonial powers of playing a double game.

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[17] Official Report, pp.158-159.

[18] Official Report, p.128.

[19] Official Report, p.132.

[20] Official Report, p.132.

Though releasing their colonies into political independence, they failed in laying the ground for economic self-reliance. The young nations are used as instruments in the cold war. Without regard for the interests of the developed nations the developing countries have to act on their own. The Conference was of the opinion that the conditions for independent action were given. A revolutionary spirit was at work, and it was the responsibility of the churches in all countries to identify themselves with this struggle.

> A revolutionary mood pervades the thought of many of the more active and influential groups in public life of the Third World and is an important factor in their politics. These groups seek national independence, not simply in the formal political sense but in the wider sense which includes economic, social and cultural factors as well. They are concerned to reduce substantially dependence on and exploitation by the developed countries. They seek economic development – by which is meant industrialisation, technological advance, and diversification of production – but at the same time they are concerned to promote equally fundamental changes in the organisation of political and economic power, in order to enable the common man – workers, peasants, the emerging middle classes, students and intellectuals etc. – to share more equally in national life.[21]

The struggle may involve revolutionary methods and even violence.

> Wherever small elites rule at the expense of the welfare of the majority, political change towards achieving a more just order as quickly as possible, should be actively promoted and supported by Christians ... In case where such changes are needed the use by Christians of revolutionary methods ... cannot be excluded a priori.[22]

What has become of all this? What was then said about the United Nations is – *mutatis mutandis* – still valid today. In decisive moments its voice cannot prevail against the big powers, but the institution remains indispensable. Again and again it succeeds in solving or at least alleviating political conflicts.

The hope that the two covenants on civil and social human rights could become common ground for the international community was not fulfilled. The Covenant on civil rights was ratified by many states and serves today as an instrument for protests against the violation of individual human rights. It became an indispensable weapon of non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International. The Covenant on Social Rights, however, was not ratified by the United States. A common basis for the realization of social rights was not achieved. And soon the struggle for social justice was further compli-

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[21] Official Report p.141.

[22] Official Report, p.142.

cated by the requirements of the ecological crisis. The vision of an international responsible society was further and further removed. With the end of the Cold War a new power constellation arose. The mutual correction of the superpowers no longer existed. The international community needed to be reconceived and built up on a new – more complex – basis.

The revolutionary spirit which pervaded the countries of the Third World has no doubt borne fruits in certain places. Some liberation movements both in Africa and to a lesser extent in Latin America succeeded in taking power. But the overall picture remained unchanged. The gap between rich and poor nations persists. The structures of injustice could not be broken up.

The appeal of the Geneva conference to the churches to identify themselves with the "spirit of revolution" was widely welcomed and taken seriously by many. At the same it was also sharply criticized by many, especially in the industrialized countries. The programme to combat racism of the WCC gave an opportunity to the churches to measure the implications of the appeal for the vocation and witness of Christians. The churches remained divided.

In 1983 the Vancouver assembly invited the WCC to engage member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It was an attempt to mobilize the churches for a struggle against injustice and ecological folly. The initiative took time to take off, and after a few years it became clear that the churches were not really willing to support the movement. The "revolutionary spirit" met with less and less response in the churches. In the 1990s even the WCC itself abandoned the project.

The appeals of the Geneva conference sound today like voices from far away. The confidence that characterized the gathering has vanished. The question today is rather to what extent the churches, in face of the political, economic and ecological complexity, are still capable of any common witness.

6. ***Revolution and Violence.*** Inevitably the reflections on revolution raised the question of the use of violence. It was one of the central preoccupations of the conference. Again and again the reports return to it. Is it possible to use violence in a targeted and limited way? Can it be applied to obtain positive results? Is it possible that violence contributes to the success of a revolution against injustice? Can it be regarded as a kind of "Caesarean operation" serving new life? The Geneva conference tended towards an affirmative answer.

> Violence is very much a reality in our world, both the overt use of force to oppress and the invisible violence (*violencia blanca*) perpetrated on people who by millions have been and still are the victims of oppression and unjust social systems. Therefore the question often emerges today whether the violence which sheds blood in planned rev-

> olutions may not be a lesser evil than the violence which, though bloodless, condemns whole populations to perennial despair ... it cannot be said that the only possible position for the Christian is one of absolute non-violence. There are situations where Christians may become involved in violence. Wherever it is used, however, it must be seen as an ultimate resource which is justified only in extreme situations.[23]

> For these reasons, the Churches have urged their members to participate responsibly in the life of the state and society ... Human experience as well as Holy Scripture shows us that the power of law is required to compel man to respect the rights of others ... While this remains true in our day, many circumstances in the modern world force men to revolution against an unjust established order.[24]

> The violent overthrow of an existing political order (cannot be excluded). For in such cases, it may very well be that the use of violent methods is the only recourse of those who wish to avoid the prolongation of the vast covert violence which the existing order involves.[25]

Such considerations played a significant role in the WCC in the following years. Especially the distinction between open and hidden violence proved to be helpful. It made it possible for the WCC to remind the rich nations and oppressive and dictatorial regimes of their responsibility and to support the rebellion of the poor nations. Open violence, went the argument, is the inevitable answer to the hidden structural violence of oppression. It must not be condemned *a priori*. The programme to combat racism was based on this distinction. The WCC exposed itself to sharp criticism. It was accused of having made its own the Marxist understanding of revolution. This was, of course, not the case. The limited approval of the use of violence was not more than a sign of solidarity with liberation fronts and other anti-racist movements, and there cannot be any doubt that this sign was registered and appreciated.

Where does this debate stand today? The opinion that violence can be applied in a limited, quasi surgical, way has increasingly been questioned in subsequent decades. Violence has its own dynamic. Once the door has been opened to let it enter, it can no longer be controlled. Experience shows that its impact cannot be foreseen. Instead of leading to dialogue and political compromise, it can harden positions for ever.

In one of its reports the Geneva conference offered the following reflections:

> Christians should think of the day after the revolution when justice must be established by clear minds and in good conscience. *There is no virtue in violence itself, but only in*

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[23] Official Report, pp.115-116.

[24] Official Report, p.122.

[25] Official Report, p.143.

> *what will come after it.* In some instances significant changes have been made by non-violent means, and Christians must develop greater skill and wisdom in using these.[26]

Already in the sixties, certain representatives of the Third World proposed other models of action. Samuel Parmar was one of them. In an article "Revolution without violence" (1969) he recalled Mahatma Gandhi and defended the thesis that for the Christian conscience non-violent revolution was ultimately the only valid approach. He affirmed the need for active resistance and was of the opinion that the authorities in power whose only concern was the maintenance of the status quo had no right to criticize the use of violence. But non-violent resistance was to be preferred to military action. Only non-violent witness was capable of bringing about lasting results of justice.[27]

Today's situation differs from the constellation of the sixties. We are confronted with a frightening spiral of violence. Oppression calls for resistance and terror, resistance and terror are repressed by further violence. As the fabric of society gets looser and more difficult to control, blind use of violence increases. Violence is today omnipresent. What seemed to be reasonable in the sixties in a particular constellation of political forces, has today lost its legitimacy. Today the main task consists in minimizing the use of violence in order to create the condition for constructive dialogue.

One expression of this changed situation was that the WCC assembly in Harare (1998) proposed to the churches a "decade to overcome violence". The title given to this project shows, however, some naïvety. Overcome violence? The question is rather to recognize the presence of violence and to contain the energies which manifest themselves in it. Violence cannot be eliminated. In this world, dominated by violence, Christian witness for peace is characterized by the effort to demonstrate an alternative way through an active but non-violent witness.

Developments over the past decades have, in addition, made clear that the use of violence is even more general than assumed in the sixties. It is not only in interpersonal relations that violence is "lurking at the door" (Genesis 4:7) but also in our relationship to creation as a whole. Through the ecological crisis we have become aware of the degree of violence in our approach to God's creation. For a long time the victims of this kind of violence have remained silent. Their groaning is becoming louder and louder. A solution of the ecological crisis is only possible if we begin to recognize and diminish also this form of violence.

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[26] Official Report, p.143.

[27] Samuel L. Parmar, *Revolution ohne Gewalt (1969)*, in : Entwicklung mit menschlichem Gesicht, p.51 ff.

7. A new and common departure? The Geneva conference raised great hopes for the ecumenical collaboration of the churches. The Second Vatican Council had ended less than a year before and was still fresh in the minds of the public. Everybody was therefore wondering what the impact would be on the conference of the opening of the Roman Catholic Church to the ecumenical movement. A strong delegation of Roman Catholic observers was present at the gathering.

Its spokesman was Mgr Charles Moeller, professor at the University of Louvain and under-secretary of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He was given an opportunity to present to the conference the findings of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World. Moeller was an open-minded theologian and was determined to give new impulses to ecumenical collaboration. His address went far beyond a simple summary. The Constitution, he said, showed that the Church faced the same problems as all Christians in the world. The Council's appeal to other churches to collaborate "was not merely conventional good manners or a stylistic addition ... but was included in the text to indicate that all of the problems dealt with were also of concern to non-Catholic denominations."[28] To corroborate this statement he urged the conference to clarify through joint common studies the following five theological issues: a) The Christian understanding of man; b) the reality of God facing atheism; c) Christology considered in harmony with an expanding universe; d) pneumatology (doctrine of the Holy Spirit); and e) eschatology or the end of time of which the gospel speaks.

This intervention was characteristic of the ecumenical mood of the sixties. Collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church seemed to be a matter of course. The common future in the ecumenical movement was envisaged, and planned for, with confidence. A year later the encyclical *Populorum progressio* was issued. A joint conference on development issues took place in Beirut. SODEPAX, a joint secretariat for questions of peace and development was established. Even the possibility of Roman Catholic membership in the WCC was seriously considered and discussed.

These hopes and expectations would, however, not be fulfilled. The collaboration soon began to reach its limits. The options and style of the partners was too different to allow for a resistant common basis. The conversations on Roman Catholic membership had to be given up. After protracted negotiation SODEPAX was finally dissolved. The proposal to launch the conciliar process

[28] Official Report, p.43.

of mutual commitment on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation together with the Roman Catholic Church was not accepted. And even the suggestion in the 1990s to develop a common witness on climate change was *de facto* rejected. The Roman Catholic Church withdrew more and more into its own orbit. Though much collaboration was initiated at the regional and local level, the integrity of the Church at the universal level was carefully maintained. More and more it became apparent that any common witness at the universal level called into question, in the eyes of the highest authorities, the claim to represent the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

The Geneva conference was driven by the hope that the progressive forces of Christianity would unite in a new departure. True, it foresaw resistance and conflicts. But hope outweighed doubts. In the following decades this hope has been gradually disappointed. Christianity has again fallen apart into different camps. The relations between the various confessional traditions are limited to dialogues. The multilateral ecumenical communion has lost much of its élan and attraction. The debate on the nature of the Church and its unity is thrown back to its beginnings as the list of reflections and questions which was issued by the Assembly of Porto Alegre shows.

Or does perhaps this anniversary provide the opportunity for a new initiative? Both the Second Vatican Council and the Geneva conference made an attempt to read the signs of the time. It is clear that this reading of the sixties is in many ways now obsolete. Has perhaps the time arrived for a new common effort?

Other contrasts could be mentioned. The 1966 Conference had, for instance, no awareness of gender issues. Its reports are all written in male language. Attention is concentrated exclusively on the witness of the churches in society. The horizon of inter-religious dialogue on social issues was absent. In the sixties, the role of non-governmental organizations was not yet as significant as today. But the seven examples outlined above suffice to show the enormous changes which have taken place in the short period of four decades.

New Theological Frontiers: Two Examples

1. ***The role of human beings in creation.*** The Geneva conference held a "high view" of human beings and their role in God's creation. Human beings have been given a dominating role in creation. Everything is oriented towards human beings – the centre of the universe. The true vocation of human beings provides the criterion for the appropriate response to the challenges of our time:

> "Subdue the earth and have dominion", God says to man (Genesis 1:28). What does this mean? Does God give man the vocation of controlling or dominating the world which he puts at man's disposal? Yes. Moreover God puts no limit upon man's dominion or control over nature except that it has to be fulfilled under God's lordship: it is man's mastery and God's lordship. Man is responsible to use his stewardship of nature to make possible a fuller human life for all mankind: in this way he regains his original God-given destiny for which Christ died and has risen. Redemption concerns nature in that the Redeemer brings creation into its still hidden destiny, the new creation. According to Romans 8:20 man has a priestly function towards the whole of nature. The proclamation of redemption affects science not in the sense that faith competes with scientific information but in that faith gives it direction. Man is invited to use his capacity to make the life of mankind more human and to reveal God's glory.[29]

> Christian theology must expound and defend the understanding of the 'human' as a criterion for judging economic and social change ... It can be applied as fruitfully to international political, economic and social structures as to national ones.[30]

The theme of the Geneva conference was human self-development. After having acquired so much new power, how are they to build society? What is the relationship between God's creative act and their own creative capacities? Ultimately, the Conference reflected and acted on the assumption that a new stage of being human had been reached. The relationship of humans to the whole of creation was not the object of any detailed considerations. The fact that human beings are part of God's creation was practically ignored. The Geneva conference was anthropocentric in the extreme. Creation was understood as the stage or the arena of human history.

This unilateral emphasis on the role of human beings was in the sixties generally accepted. It was also shared by the Second Vatican Council. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* solemnly declared: "Believers and non-believers are in general agreement that everything on earth is ordered toward man, the summit and central point of creation (§12)."

Individual authors went even further. In a theological bestseller which was published only one year before the Conference we read the following interpretation of Genesis 2:18-20:

> The act of naming is an original and creative one. Man does not "form" the animals but he does give them names. Yet naming and forming must not be too widely separated. As God begins his activity in Genesis 1, the earth is described 'without form' and

[29] Official Report, p.198.

[30] Official Report, p.52.

> void. God's creative activity includes forming, separating and naming. Then, after he creates man, he enlists him in this creating activity. Thus the world does not come to man already finished and ordered. It comes in part confused and formless *and receives its significance from man*. Since man names the animals, *the meaning they have comes from the fact that they are incorporated in his life. Their significance arises from the fact that they are part of his projects and purposes* ... Here is a truly exalted view of man. God does not simply insert man into a world filled with creatures which are already named, in relationship and meaning patterns already established by decree. Man must fashion them himself. He does not simply discover meaning but originates it.[31]

One year after the Conference Lynn White published his famous article, "Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis".[32] He developed the thesis that Christianity was partly responsible for today's ecological crisis. Because, he said, "I don't know of any religion which places human beings so exclusively at the centre of all attention." Though his thesis does certainly not do justice to the biblical witness, he could have used as an argument statements both from the Vatican Council and the Geneva conference.

In subsequent years it became increasingly clear that human beings cannot be isolated from the whole of creation. According to the second account of God's creation Adam was taken from the earth and must again return to the earth. Human beings ultimately depend on the gifts of the earth. True, a special role has been attributed to them. They are stewards of God's creation and called to cultivate responsibly God's garden. Their survival depends on the way in which they deal with the gifts of creation. In order to respond credibly to the ecological crisis, a revision of Christian anthropology is called for:

> Obsolete theological statements continue, however, to exercise their influence. §12 of *Gaudium et spes* is still part of the theological discourse in many Roman Catholic circles and even in the WCC the issue of the relationship between human beings and the whole of creation does not receive adequate attention. The recent study paper of the Commission on Faith and Order on Christian anthropology does not take up the issue, but addresses all kinds of other less important themes.[33]

2. *Human planning and God's kingdom.* The Geneva conference was evidently convinced that it lived in a privileged generation. New horizons had opened. "We know that God appears to have set no limits to what may be achieved by our generation, if we understand our own problems aright and

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[31] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, SCM Press 1965, pp.73-74.

[32] Science 155, 1967, 1203-1207.

[33] *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology,* A Faith and Order Study Document, Faith and Order Paper 199, WCC, Geneva 2005.

desire to obey in our circumstances." This opportunity needed to seized. How far the radical ethics of the kingdom of God can be realized, is beyond our knowledge. But it is clear that God is leading us to a new degree of being human.

How is the relationship between human planning and action, and the coming of God's kingdom to be understood? Many formulations in 1966 seemed to indicate that the scientific and technological revolutions should be read as signs of God's kingdom. What happens at this stage of history can be considered as an anticipation of the kingdom. The Second Vatican Council argued in similar ways. The signs of the time speak a positive language. They are signals of hope.

This view of history has been called into question by the developments of the last decades, which represent, in fact, a humiliation of humankind. True, humans have to fulfill a new responsibility. They need to take decisions affecting not only their own future, but also the whole of creation; and they are clearly not in a position to fulfill this new responsibility. Their planning is incomplete and often erroneous. Consequences can be fatal. The Geneva conference conceded that "the long-term future remains hidden". But, in reality, every single step involves uncertainties and risks. Planning is inevitable. But historical events constantly override our previsions and forecasts. The future is in God's hands. True, sometimes justice is established. Oppression is overturned: moments of grace. But coherent planning of historical developments is clearly out of question.

The signs of the time today, however, speak a different language than four decades ago. The scientific and technological revolutions have shaken the inherited structures of society. The lack of wisdom in dealing with the gifts of God's creation has led to destruction, and it is more than likely that this work of destruction will continue. What is then the task of the churches today? The gospel provides them with the assurance that God will ultimately not abandon creation. Even where we see nothing but destruction and violence the Spirit is in fact at work. God's creation will be renewed, and the folly humans have caused will be corrected. And the same Spirit is at work in our own midst. Signs of God's future become visible. They are made up of acts of love and solidarity. Whether successful or not, according to human standards, they have their deep significance as signs of God's new creation which has been promised.

A text on the relationship of human action and God's kingdom, rich in meaning, was formulated at the Conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" in Boston in 1979:

The work of God enacted in Jesus Christ, is love – a love without limits, a love that seeks justice. The fulfillment of God's love is the purpose of the world, its symbol the cross. On the cross of Christ the real possibilities of human beings find their limitations and God's power finds its expression. God is creator; the world is his creation. We men and women have failed to live the life of love which God intends for us, but Christians testify that the love of God overcomes our human guilt and the supernatural structures of evil, the principalities and powers. Therefore, in as far as we are faithful, we await with confidence the coming of God's kingdom of love in which justice and peace and joy will be known by all and God will be all in all. No human acts can bring God's kingdom to its perfection, for it is God's work in his own time. We are dependent upon the Spirit. Yes, in the historical reality of God's work in Christ, we have grounds for hope. Hence we Christians can commit ourselves in the Spirit to our work now. Our work will be finite and limited, yet it is a commitment in which we have the real opportunity to live together in love. This is why we want to work together for a just, participatory and sustainable society. This is why Christians – though they themselves often defy God – can experience hope as a present reality, even in the direst suffering and loneliness.[34]

[34] Paul Abrecht (ed.), *Faith and Science in an unjust world, Report of the WCC Conference on Faith, Science and the Future*, vol. 2 : Report and Recommendations, Geneva 1980, p.147.

Geneva 1966 and Orthodoxy

Acting together for transformation

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The initiative to mark the 40th anniversary of the World Conference on Church is something I welcome. Such commemoration remains a challenge for both institutions and individuals. Evaluation of the contribution or achievements of such events, negative or positive, needs to be done by placing them on an axis of continuity and renewal of acting together for transformation. There is a sense of responsibility to convey the authentic message of the event for future generations so as to link all generations in the process of examining new and urgent challenges. Through this research I personally have discovered the significant contribution both the ecumenical movement and particularly Orthodoxy made at that time to developing an interdisciplinary approach to addressing the social and technological revolutions. I shall attempt in the light of the 1966 Geneva Conference to draw out the implications and consequences of this important meeting for the Orthodox Church in the 20th century. Without underestimating the initiatives and contributions at a local level I shall concentrate on the pan-Orthodox level both before and following the conference.

The Orthodox Church is a traditional Church with experience, meaning that it is open to dialogue in the spirit of continuity and renewal. In its pursuit of the renewal of the world's spiritual and cultural identity, it is the duty of Orthodoxy to proclaim and disseminate Christian beliefs about the relationship between God, human beings and the world. Since the Christian world perpetually faces a moral crisis, the Orthodox Church has been fulfilling this mission throughout its history by dealing,

> With living the Christian life, attempting to interpret in an orderly fashion the basic principles that underlie it and the specific application of Orthodox Christian moral teachings to the human situation.[1]

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[1] Khodre, Metropolitan Georges, *L'appel de l'Esprit: Eglise et société*, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 2001, p.164.

Prior to the 1966 Geneva world conference

Allow me to begin the historical survey of Church and Society issues raised in the conscience of Orthodox hierarchs, clergy and theologians and in collaboration with other Christian churches by quoting the encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920,

> The terrible world war which has just finished brought to light many unhealthy symptoms in the life of the Christian peoples, and often revealed great lack of respect even for the elementary principles of justice and charity. Thus it worsened already existing wounds and opened other new ones of a more material kind, which demand the attention and care of all the churches... All these and the like, as they threaten the very essence of Christian societies are ... timely topics requiring ... common study and cooperation...[2]

As the various international ecumenical organizations the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship, Faith and Order and Life and Work held many meetings after the first world war in an attempt to search for a way to unite all Christian forces against moral evil, so Orthodox hierarchs and theologians also recognized the need for a closer collaboration on a pan-Orthodox level. Professor Hamilcar Alivisatos of the University of Athens launched this initiative in 1922 and the First Congress of Orthodox Theology in 1936 was held at Athens and has now marked its 70th anniversary.[3] The agenda included not only the position of theological science in the Orthodox Church but also theological papers on ecclesiastical questions such as the possibility of the convocation of an ecumenical council (now reformulated as a Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church); the interior and exterior mission of the Orthodox Church; the Church in relation to culture; the Church in relation to the state in international law and in relation to social issues. This prepared the ground for confronting contemporary issues of the time by exploring the fundamental principles of Orthodox theology, calling also for common action by humanity based on the social importance of the Holy Trinity. This Congress was to be very promising for the future of the Orthodox Church, offering great theological and spiritual dynamism.

Thirty years later, forty days before the opening of the 1966 Geneva conference, as a result of the initiative, encouragement and support of Mr George Lemos, a committed Greek Orthodox businessman who also participated at the

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[2] *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement. Documents and Statements 1902-1975*, Ed. by Constantin G. Patelos, Geneva 1978, p.42.

[3] Procès-verbaux du premier congrès de théologie orthodoxe à Athènes (29 novembre – 6 décembre 1936. Edité par le prof. Hamilcar S. Alivisatos, Athènes "Pyrsos" 1939, p.13.

1966 Geneva conference, the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and the Holy Synod responded to these various challenges and the spiritual expression of the world vocation of the Orthodox Church in the modern era by establishing the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in Chambésy, Geneva on 6 June 1966; it has now also marked its 40th anniversary. This Centre would also facilitate contact between the local Orthodox churches. Its mission was inspired by the vision of the Apostle Paul of the Gentiles, represented in a fresco at the entrance to the Church of Saint Paul. This vision, according to the story in the Acts of the Apostles, was decisive for the historical progress of Christianity in Europe. Saint Paul chose to obey the man from Macedonia who appeared in his dream, requesting him to "Come to Macedonia and help us", and not to continue his mission to Asia as he had intended. This fresco emphasizes the contemporary world, mountains of factories with pipes and chimneys belching out smoke, which could represent the West of today and particularly its ecological problems. Below, on the other side of the sea, is a garden of broken columns to signify the end of antiquity and paganism. Saint Paul is ready to help every epoch, in particular our era, the fact is that the constant development of technology is not necessarily an obstacle to religious sentiment. The Center went some way towards opening up the Orthodox Church to the West – a bridge between East and West or a window through which the East could look at the West and vice versa.

Furthermore, this Centre, as the headquarters of the Secretariat for Preparation of the Great and Holy Council, based on a pan-Orthodox decision in 1968, under the responsibility of Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland (1968-2001, now Metropolitan of Adrinople) and succeeded by Metropolitan Jérémie of Switzerland, has truly reinforced Orthodox unity over the past forty years and has expressed the Orthodox position on the specific challenges of our times.

The 1966 Geneva Conference on Church and Society

At the 1966 Geneva conference there were 34 representatives of the Orthodox Church: theologians, scientists, lawyers, a sociologist, a businessman and an interior designer. The Orthodox churches represented were the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Russian, Bulgarian, Romanian and Greek churches, including representation from the diaspora. The majority of the participants were from the Church of Russia. There were also 10 representatives from the Oriental Orthodox churches.

In the preparation of four volumes of essays which would help the conference in considering the central issues for Christian social ethics in contemporary

society there were only two Orthodox contributions. The first contribution was by Dr Nikos A. Nissiotis, then associate director of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute on "Church and Society in Greek Orthodox Theology" for the volume on "Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World".[4] Nissiotis articulated and analyzed some fundamental theological principles of Orthodox theology and tradition that could be used to offer a possible approach to the problem of all forms of relationships between church and society having a comprehensive and flexible position. It also placed particular emphasis on Greece as an eastern country that is completely involved in a western type of industrialization and secularization.[5] Due to the rise of the modern type of social relationships and the reorganization of social and economic life, Nissiotis underlined the necessity for the Church of Greece

> to pass from unsystematic social assistance, based on good will to answer emergencies, to systematic social action ... that flows out of the one unbroken community of Christ among his churches into the world as the one undivided *martyria*, in action, to manifest his Lordship over all and in all.[6]

The second contribution was by Paul Verghese, from the Syrian Orthodox Church, then associate general secretary of the WCC, on "Secular Society or Pluralistic Community" for the volume on Man in Community.[7] Following an extensive analysis on the definition of secularization he elaborates, in the section on The Elements of a Pluralistic Community, the fundamental elements of the Christian social thinking which are based on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Incarnation, thus the fundamental concept of "freedom of love".[8]

Unfortunately there was no Orthodox perspective on "Responsible Government in a Revolutionary Age" and "Economic Growth in a World Perspective", topics which still remain to be addressed at a pan-Orthodox level.

At the 1966 Conference opening session, among the six speakers Vitaly Borovoy, an Orthodox theologian from the Russian Orthodox Church, then director of Faith and Order, spoke on "The Challenge and Relevance of Theology to the Social Revolutions of our Time",[9] from his own experience under the conditions of the social revolution and explained the relationship of Christianity to revolution as – "a call to repentance for every separate individual and

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[4] Bennett, John C., Association Press 1966, pp.78-104.

[5] Ibid., p.78.

[6] Ibid., pp.103-104.

[7] Vries de Egbert, *Man in Community*, Associated Press 1966, pp.359-382.

[8] Ibid., pp.364-365.

[9] *Ecumenical Review*, Volume 28,4 (October 1966) pp.454-460; *Irénikon* 39,3(1966) pp.403-407 (in French).

for society as a whole. Thus Christianity is by its very nature revolutionary."[10] As a result of the profound changes that had taken place in philosophical, scientific and theological thinking it allowed the Church to "work out a theology of development and of revolution".[11] The ecumenical movement as a whole – the WCC and the Second Vatican Council – was qualified by Borovoy as being only a "start, indeed a tentative and uncertain start". Borovoy took an ethical stance in his address in inviting Christians to "boldly, honourably and actively join in the building of the new life, based on social justice; ... bring a Christian fervour to the social revolutions of our time and thus avert the de-Christianization of the contemporary world – not a distant possibility but it could be a real fact."[12] The question of the Church and revolution created more controversy than any of all the issues raised at the conference which nevertheless brought them to the conclusion that, "As Christians, we are committed to working for the transformation of society..."[13]

Although a declaration was made at a post-conference discussion on the above issues at Zagorsk in March 1968,[14] during which an opening address was made by Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Ladoga, also present at the Geneva conference, we discover that unfortunately there was very little literature published from an Orthodox point of view. However, the French Orthodox periodical *Contacts* did dedicate an issue to the theme of Church and Society in 1966 by publishing two articles. The first, still relevant then as now, was by Nicolas Berdiaev on *Le problème sociologique et métaphysique de la technique* (The sociological and metaphysical problem of technology) originally published thirty years earlier, the second was by the Reverend Boris Bobrinskoy on *Le Saint Esprit, vie de l'Eglise* (The Holy Spirit, life of the Church). In the editorial, the official spokesmen of Orthodoxy at the conference were criticized for not presenting more than unilateral points of view and banalities. Thus the above articles selected would provide creative reflection on problems which the Orthodox would need to confront and respond to.[15] At the beginning of 1967 another issue was dedicated to "The Orthodox Church and the World", for a meeting of forty Greek theologians in Thessaloniki which was held in August 1966 to study the major problems of the church at that time and relations with the modern world. Although there were no real conclusions, debate took place

[10] Ibid., p.457.

[11] Ibid., p.458.

[12] Ibid., pp.459-460.

[13] Albrecht, Paul, p.254.

[14] See Section on Documents : Le colloque sur les questions théologiques d'Eglise et société (Zagorsk, 17-23 mars 1968), *Istina* 3-4 (juillet-décembre 1968) pp.445-502.

[15] *Contacts* 55 (1966) pp.145-146.

confronting notions about the nature of dialogue between the church and the world. A consensus that an intimate solidarity exists between church and world did emerge, yet with diverging positions on whether the church could draw anything essential from this for its life and truth. Again, having not been able to consult the proceedings of this meeting, it could not be determined whether there was any reference to the Geneva conference.[16]

In other publications, for example the three volumes on the History of the Ecumenical Movement, there is again a lack of reflection and not even a brief reference to the 1966 Geneva conference from Orthodox perspectives. In the article by Vasil T. Istavridis on The Orthodox Churches in the Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968,[17] there is not even a paragraph on social ethics in the section on Orthodoxy and wider ecumenism. However, Harakas has a section in his article on The Orthodox Churches and Science and Technology and briefly mentions the 1966 Geneva conference and how the contribution of the "wholeness" of the Orthodox vision led to the issue of the integrity of creation.[18] He traces the significant contribution of Orthodox theologians in this area beginning with the world conference on Faith, Science and the Future. Paulus Gregorios is known for his Orthodox approach to science and Vitaly Borovoy for having raised his concern for the environment, having made special reference to the Russian philosopher-theologian Nicolay Fedorov (1828-1903), who called for a common struggle of all people against the corrupting forces of the ecological crisis. The question of the environment and creation as well as of justice and peace were addressed in two important Orthodox consultations (1987, Minsk and 1989, Sofia) under the responsibility of Gennadios Limouris. Harakas also highlights the ecological initiatives of the late Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I which intensified under Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I through seminars on Religion, Science and Environment.

To return to the conference itself, of all the issues raised, allow me to particularly refer to a concrete example of the social response and action to the worldwide struggle against racism at that time in the United States and South Africa.[19] In order to urge the churches to become more actively involved in this area, Rev. Dr Martin Luther King was invited to the conference. Though unable

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[16] *Contacts* 57 (1967) pp.66-68.

[17] "The Orthodox Churches in the Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968 " in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2 1948-1968*, edited by Harold C. Fey, WCC Geneva 2004.

[18] Harakas, Stanley, *Science and Technology*, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2 p.395.

[19] Bishop Alpheus Zulu of South Africa, one of the presidents of the Conference, invited to attend, was denied a passport by the South African government. Abrecht, Paul, "The Development of Ecumenical Soucial Thought and Action" in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2 1948-1968*, edited by Harold C. Fey, WCC Geneva 2004, p.246. Following the 1966 Geneva Conference, the First International Seminar on Apartheid was held in Brasilia.

to attend due to the race riots in Chicago, a videotaped sermon by him was shown in St Pierre Cathedral in Geneva and televized throughout Europe.[20] In recalling his impressive sermon, we cannot but also remember and commemorate an Orthodox champion of civil and human rights, the late Archbishop Iakovos (who served for nine years as president of the WCC and permanent representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the WCC 1951-1955), who had the courage to walk hand in hand with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama. A historic moment for America which was captured on the cover of LIFE Magazine in March 1965. He vigorously supported the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights legislation exclaiming when the first bill was passed, "Glory to the Most High! May this mark the beginning of a new age for all humankind, an era when the Word of God charts and guides our lives". "Ecumenism," His Eminence said, "is the hope for international understanding, for humanitarian allegiance, for true peace based on justice and dignity, and for God's continued presence and involvement in modern history." [21]

After the 1966 Geneva world conference

It took forty years for the Second Congress of Orthodox Theology to be held in August 1976 in Athens. As a result of the pan-Orthodox activity and involvement in the ecumenical movement this Congress proved to be more comprehensive for theologians to discuss together "Theology and its realization today", according to the different social and political areas which were of significance for them and for their participation in the ecumenical movement.[22] There were tensions among the Orthodox theologians present, as Professor S. Agouridès describes in his prologue of the proceedings,

> The contents of this volume are hardly surprising. In places one sees defensive attitudes for the preservation of tradition, in others typical expressions of conservatism but also creative attempts to open up new paths. Forty years after the First Meeting of the Orthodox scholars, from the two different spheres of influence in the world, there was now a very natural reservedness on both sides to avoid disturbing mutual relations. Thus inevitably the Reports and the Comments were composed with care, usually avoiding any form of theological, social or political obstacle on either side. Nevertheless, in the Group Discussion a more leisurely, yet frank spirit prevailed, which meant that although we can still express common views on different subjects it is not simply a matter of talking things over nicely amongst ourselves. We were made aware of the need we have for each other.[23]

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[20] Ibid., p.246.

[21] http://www.goarch.org/en/archbishop/iakovos/biography.asp

[22] Procès-verbaux du deuxième congrès de théologie orthodoxe à Athènes (19-29 août 1976). Edité par le professeur Savas Chr. Agouridès, Athènes 1978, p.7.

[23] Ibid. p.8.

"To act together to transform the unity of our faith should have a unity of life as a consequence."[24]

In 1976, the Second Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference revised the catalogue of themes drawn up by the First Pan-Orthodox Conference of Rhodes, 1961. The Great and Holy Council should concern itself with serious problems of the time *since the faithful of the Church are awaiting exceptional spiritual help* – inasmuch as it should be a major historical event for the Church, possibly even for humankind, and a privilege of our generation. The list of topics included: the question of a common calendar, impediments to marriage, adaptation of the ecclesiological ordinances regarding fasting, relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world; the Orthodox and the Ecumenical Movement, the contribution of the local Orthodox churches to the triumph of the Christian ideals of peace, freedom, fraternity and charity among peoples, and to the elimination of racial discrimination.

If John Bennett referred to the 1966 Geneva Conference a "climactic event" due to the greatest participation of the third world and the fulfillment of ...many years of work to bring into the centre of the activities of the World Council of Churches the commitment to social justice on a global basis, then the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in 1986, could be considered as the fulfilment of a pan-Orthodox theological discussion in the area of peace and justice and issues related to Church and Society of the past century and for future generations.

The human *person* is the real focus of the mission of the Orthodox Church in the world and in the history of salvation. Humans are created in the image and likeness of God. Human ontology is founded in the person of Christ, God's incarnate Logos. Christ assumes human nature and of all creation restoring humanity to its holiness by eliminating evil and death.

Allow me to quote the profound decision of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference of 1986 on: "The contribution of the local Orthodox Churches to the realization of peace, justice, freedom, fraternity and love between nations, and the removal of racial and other discriminations",

> By the very fact of having access to the meaning of salvation, we Orthodox Christians have the obligation to struggle for the relief of illnesses, grief and fear. Since we have experienced peace, we cannot remain indifferent to its absence from today's society. Since we have benefited from God's justice, we struggle for greater justice in the world and for the eradication of all forms of oppression. Since every day, we experience divine

[24] Ibid., Comments by Professor George I. Mantzarides, p.381.

> clemency, we combat all forms of fanaticism and intolerance between men and nations. Since we incessantly proclaim the incarnation of God and the deification of man, we defend human rights for all men and all nations. Since by the mercy of Christ's salutary deeds we experience the divine gift of freedom, we can declare its universal value for all men and all nations in a more comprehensive manner. Since, having been nourished by the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Holy Eucharist, we experience the need to share God's gifts with our neighbors, we have a better understanding of famine and deprivation and we struggle for their abolition. Since we await a new heaven and a new earth where absolute justice will reign, we struggle here and now for the rebirth and renewal of man and society.[25]

This declaration, expressing the Orthodox awareness and inviting action, does provide modern men and women with a Christian moral guide to direct themselves and the world to the kingdom which has already been inaugurated here on earth, and which has a pre-eminently spiritual character: a witness of love and *the hope which is in us* according to the Holy Scripture and Tradition. The list of social themes addressed at the conference was not exhaustive but this has not prevented the Orthodox Church from later discussing other contemporary challenges for example bioethics, religion and science, etc.

Reference must also be made to the message of the Primates of the Most Holy Orthodox Churches at Phanar in 1992, as it focussed on and expressed their social concern.

> The most Holy Orthodox Church throughout the oikoumene, sojourning in the world being inevitably affected by the changes taking place in it, finds herself today confronted with particularly severe and urgent problems which she desires to face as one body, adhering to St Paul who said: "if one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor. 12:28). Moreover, looking into the future of humankind and that of the whole of God's creation in light of our entrance into the third millennium A.D. of history, at a time of rapid spiritual and social changes, fulfilling her sacred duty, the Church wishes to bear her own witness, giving account "for the hope that is in us" (1 Pet. 3:15) in humility, love and boldness.

The series of seventeen ecumenical and interdisciplinary international postgraduate theological seminars from 1980-1996, organized by the Orthodox Center on topics of particular interest concerning relations between Orthodox churches and other churches and confessions on topics of significance to contemporary society –Theology in the Church and in the World; Peace, Church and State; Religion and Society; Ecological problems etc. – also helped the

[25] Decisions of the IIIrd Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (Chambésy, 28 October – 6 November), *Episkepsis* 369 (15.12.1986) pp. 25-26.

church deepen theological reflection in view of a pan-Orthodox position. At the same time these seminars have served to train specialized scholars and young leaders to renew the theological potential of Orthodoxy while preserving the historical continuity of the message, as well as contact with its roots and tradition. This approach prepared for the creation of the Institute of Postgraduate Studies in Orthodox Theology at the Orthodox Center in 1996, now commemorating its 10th anniversary. An innovative, creative and challenging institution with great potential, especially in terms of the vocation and responsibility that young students, who are recommended by their churches, gain by the time they return to their local churches to continue their vocation as Christians in the world.

Orthodoxy and the World Council of Churches

The following questions of theological basis about ecumenical social thinking raised by Paul Abrecht in his analysis of the 1966 Conference are still relevant for our times in the context of the WCC and most especially in light of the Orthodox approach,

> How is it that theologians and laymen are able to come to a relatively large measure of agreement on practical Christian social action is spite of their inability to resolve certain fundamental theological issues of faith and order?... How much of a common theological or ecclesiological rationale is necessary before an authentic ecumenical word on social questions can be spoken?[26]

A breakthrough in this direction took place following a WCC visit to Moscow in June 2001, and a series of social and ethical reflections by the Russian Orthodox Church resulting in the Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, given at WCC seminar on Methodologies in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues in October 2003 at Morges, Switzerland.

This seminar proved to be a useful exercise and provided an excellent framework for constructive dialogue by focusing on the methodologies and contexts which underlie moral and ethical positions and the particular configuration of Scripture and Tradition, experience and reason that are used within different traditions. This process contributed in an essential manner to a deeper understanding and growing trust among churches, in the area of the sanctity of life and secular ethics, with converging and mutual resonances or diverging perspectives.

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[26] Abrecht, Paul, "The Development of Ecumenical Social Thought and Action" in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2 1948-1968*, edited by Harold C. Fey, WCC Geneva 2004, 257.

While the church is called unceasingly to be in dialogue with the secular world, it is important that WCC member churches stand firmly by their theological principles and support fundamental Christian values. However, this dialogue presupposes a multilateral dialogue between the churches in order to offer common witness wherever possible. If the churches do not share the same positions in spite of the same Christian sources such as scripture, tradition, experience, reason for ethical reflections or analyses, then this also needs to be emphasized in a spirit of mutual understanding. It is clear that churches have different approaches to questions of secular ethics. At the seminar in Morges we discovered that we share a common perspective on a broad range of fundamental areas in bioethical and ecological issues. For example, the value of life as a gift of God; human beings made in the image and likeness of God; the call to live in God's grace, etc. The ecumenical challenge with respect to the sanctity of life and secular ethics lies in the relationship of theological or ethical reflections from our confessional stance and life of the church as a whole. In further studying the sources and methods of the churches' moral and ethical thinking we can then move forward to building a society with the values of Christianity. Religious and theological education is a good means for promoting Christian values and a culture of peace and tolerance.

Conclusion

According to Harakas, "there is often an attempt on the part of scholars to present Orthodoxy in terms of passivity, other-worldliness, and disinterestedness for the concerns of this world". This perspective I believe has been effectively challenged even more intensively once examination is also made of the conciliar process of the Orthodox Church over the past century. Indeed there has been a long tradition of social ethics in its life which continues to the present day. In addition to the academic contributions throughout the last century on social ethics[27] there has been further witness and impact through recent publications, articles and books by Orthodox hierarchs and theologians who have played a key role in this area. Allow me to cite several religious leaders and known authors: *Orthodox Facing the World*, by Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, *Eglise et Société, (Church and Society)* by Metropolitan Georges Khodre of the Patriarchate of Antioch, *Orthodoxy and World*, by Metropolitan Damaskinos of Adrianople of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, etc.

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[27] See bibliography in Stanley Harakas, *[Wholeness of Faith and Orthodox Christian Ethics, Part Three, Orthodox Social Ethics], Holy Cross*, Brookline 2004.

In examining the nature of the 1966 Geneva conference, Orthodox theologians were invited to articulate for the first time the theological principles for the basis of the social concerns in society, on concrete issues, and to encourage concrete outreach and involvement. Orthodox theology was translated into application, notwithstanding the social welfare and philanthropy of the early Church and during the Byzantine Empire. Furthermore Orthodoxy was able for the first time to express and convey to the West its doctrine and the consequences of its theology in the world. The WCC assembly in New Delhi in 1961 had already begun the process for Orthodoxy to search for a passage from theological vision towards its implications – and not applications since this was already an integral part of her life – in acting together for transformation. Orthodoxy has gradually become valuable, creative and more and more active in regional and international organizations directly concerned with social issues.

Yet in my opinion in view of the rapid developments in the world in all sectors of society, economic, political, technical, etc., Orthodoxy is still called on to accelerate the process of study and reflection in order respond, effectively and affectively on an inter-Orthodox, inter-Christian, inter-religious level and international levels.

Reflections on Geneva 1966 and Liberation Theology from the South

Mercy Odoyuye

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The African names and images captured in photos that came to me from Geneva 1966 include Burgess Carr, Eduardo Mondale, Bola Ige and Adeolu Adegbola. If I am unable to recall other 1966 voices from Africa, it is even more challenging to recall other voices from the South, especially in the absence of reliable archival resources where I am now located.

The World Conference on Church and Society in Geneva 1966 took place before my formal involvement in the ecumenical movement, but the ripples from the Geneva conference grew into a wave that broke over Uppsala 1968 and I was there: the programme to combat racism, the struggle by women for inclusiveness, the debate between Akanu Ibiam and Bola Ige about the Nigerian civil war. The latter was present in Geneva in 1966 and the former was a president of the WCC. The debate on the UN decade for development and the call for churches to use 2 per cent of their budgets for development, however, received a lukewarm reception. I remember one European young person declaring in a group discussion that he owed posterity nothing, saying that if we pillage the earth now, the future will find its own way. I was shocked. Another young person, a priest from the Orthodox family, claimed that his country had never had exploitative relations with Africa. He had of course never landed at an airport in Africa. 1966 was a landmark event not only for the ecumenical movement but also for several individuals. I speak therefore, as one who was not at Geneva 66 but who was in the swell of that momentous wave.

Ghana, like several African, Asian, Pacific and Caribbean countries, had experienced only a decade of independence from colonial rule in 1966. Some had had more, others less. Much of Latin America was or had been in the throes of

revolution. There was a clear North-South axis on which geo-politics and economic relations were being discussed, and the East-West "cold war" seemed to be at its coldest, with both sides wooing the South and the United Nations busy with the development decade. For the South the issue was a development process that would rid them of the economic burdens they had borne for the North during the colonial period, and which continued through what was termed neo-colonialism. No one ignored the fact that such structures of exploitation were being played out between nations as well as within nations. Nothing less than a new humanity in a new world would right the wrongs of this experience.

At Edinburgh in 1910 the missionary movements, later to become part of the World Council of Churches, a loyal opposition to the erstwhile "social Gospel", had determined at that time that South America had already been christianized, and so attention was to be focused on Asia and Africa. In the event Africa succumbed to the churches' missionary effort, while Asia by and large resisted. But churches, in both North and South, saw human development as an integral part of the good news that Jesus preached, and at Uppsala prepared to amplify the UN call for development. Unlike Edinburgh, there were significant voices from the South at both Geneva 66 and at Uppsala 68. So far I have not had time to access the records to pick up the voices from the South at Geneva in 1966, but there is one association that bears the name "third world" and that has membership from "the South" and which bears the marks of Geneva 66. This is the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). This is not the place to review the debate about the appropriateness of the term "third world"; the importance is that these are voices from "the South" that could have been heard at Geneva 66.

In the same year as Uppsala in 1968, the first Conference of Latin American Catholic Bishops took place in Medellin in Colombia with its focus on concern for the poor, something later described as the "preferential option for the poor". Since its formation in December 1976 in Dar es Salaam, a year after the Nairobi assembly and 10 years after the Geneva conference on church and society, the theologians in EATWOT have been the voice of "the South" on the issues raised at Geneva in 1966. EATWOT has been seeking and providing a theology to undergird the participation of the church and Christians in the struggle for liberation in "the South" and is now seeking alternatives to respond to the current challenges of globalization. The liberation theology espoused by EATWOT has generated much controversy, even among people who see the validity of the option for the poor. The term globalization now numbs the edge of the sharpness of the critique of the economic disorder that is generated by those who run the world with economic power.

> It is in the area of politics that the poor are seeking to create something new with space for all to participate. Their action is prophetic; it is open to the future. In their political awakening and social mobilization, their faith in God is becoming a central element.[1]

Pierre Rossouw (1989) writes on EATWOT, "according to so called first world standards, a culture of poverty pervades the so called third world". In the third world, Christianity struggles against "suppression, dependence, exploitation and fatalism and against individual, local, structural and trans-national injustice, that is a fight for full human dignity". He describes liberation theology as having "developed against this background in the so-called third world especially in South America".[2]

EATWOT and liberation theology have carried voices from the South on the issues and challenges of human development and it has appropriately named its regular journal, "Voices from the Third World". EATWOT is intended as a forum for theological dialogue among theologians form the South. Its dialogues to date (for ex: Accra 1977, Sao Paulo 1980, New Delhi 1981, Oaxtepec – Mexico 1986) tell the story that Geneva 1966 made public on the global scene in placing the debate on liberation theology and its gospel message within a global, North-South agenda. Since then, EATWOT conferences and its national, continental and trans-continental dialogues have pursued this agenda in the context of the Philippines, Ecuador and South Africa to make the voices from the South part of the global agenda for human development and ecological sanity. Twenty years after Geneva 1966, the fifty or so theologians from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and minorities from the USA that made up EATWOT observed that,

> In contrast to the years 1976-1981, which were boom years for the Third World and provided much cause for hope, the years 1981-1986 were difficult ones for most countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The First World nations have regained their control of the international situation. In the Third World the outlook has turned grim; the previous hope has slowly been dampened.[3]

The world's economy was in disorder as far as the South was concerned: UNCTAD had not worked, repressive regimes had multiplied in the South, and as was further observed, "The first world and elite group are right at the heart of the Third World. These people make economic schemes work for the world

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[1] Pierre Rossouw, *Ecumenical Panorama: a Perspective from South Africa, 1989*, Transco Press, Roodespoort, SA.pp.50-51.

[2] *Third World Theologies, Commonalities and Divergences,* Orbis Books, MaryKnoll, NY.

[3] *Third World Theologies, Commonalities and Divergences,* Orbis Books, MaryKnoll, New York, p.196 No. 1

oligarchy." This was and still is the situation from which theology is undertaken in the South, and because of which the Conference on Church and Society was held. Unfortunately, "the secular powers from centres of domination attacked liberation theology and the ecclesial powers either concurred or simply ignored the liberative reading of the Bible."

Rossouw concluded his piece on EATWOT by asking, "Is it justified to doom this theology out of hand and to reject it as Marxistic? Is there not a lot of truth in their criticism that traditional theology bolsters up the *status quo* ...?" He charges the church with having condoned feudalism, slavery, colonization, imperialism and capitalism, "approved them through selfish silence". Should a reformed church not participate in reforming society? Should renewal of the church not flow into renewal of humankind and of society? These are questions from the South. But there were many voices in Geneva 66 and today also that see this way of viewing the churches' mission as sheer functionalism. Nevertheless, EATWOT states in the final statement,

> The Church, the body of Christ, needs to become aware of its role in today's reality... Jesus identified himself with the victims of oppression, thus exposing the reality of sin. Liberating them from the power of sin and reconciling them with God and with one another, he restored them to the fullness of their humanity. Therefore, the church's mission is for the realization of the wholeness of the human person.[4]

Rossouw's concluding thought is also worth quoting; he states, "selective indignation and unfair condemnation have no place in proper ecumenical ethics."

Voices from the South have been disturbing voices since they burst onto the ecumenical scene. They have presented from the underside of the history that the North has written and that has not been comforting. They have been critical of the oppression and exploitation within the southern nations, and this has not endeared them to some churches, governments and individuals. The term globalization seeks to numb the edge of this critique. An earlier way of countering the term Third World was to showcase "One World". One earth, yes, but the fact that the contemporary theological world has the term "Christianity in the non-Western world" does say something. A further word from EATWOT is appropriate here as the issue is total humanity and not just economic prosperity,

> We are wounded cultures. Our churches have been colonized, attached, devalued, distorted. Assimilation, negation, segregation, vandalism, school systems, technology, and

[4] Ibid. p.209.

> the invasion of the media were the weapons used to uproot, degrade and depersonalize our peoples.[5]

In Africa, Asia and Latin America the theological formulation to undergird the struggle for humanization has not been a monolithic structure. The situations they live in vary but the commonalities keep their theologies in the ambit of what brings liberation of the whole person and the society and the whole ecosystem. Situations in the South vary. For Africa of the 1960s it was the struggle for political independence and against apartheid in South Africa that was uppermost. The WCC labelled this scenario as "rapid social change in Africa"».

The department of Church and Society was deeply involved in Africa's major crises; racism in Southern Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia oozed out horrible stories of the worst aspects of European occupation of Africa and what it meant for the indigenous peoples of the continent. In a 1964 conference, race relations in Southern Africa had been addressed by Daisuke Kitagawa and Z.K. Matthews. Rapid social change in Africa was the ecumenical concern that preceded Geneva 1966. The difference in 1966 was the increased number of voices of people from the South at the Geneva meeting. Enduring issues from Geneva 66 and how voices from the South have addressed them in the past four decades are illustrated by the concerns of EATWOT as in several other ecumenical organizations.

The South had initiated a shift from timeless truths to contextual realities; actual movements seeking transformation in economic, political, technological, cultural and scientific contexts were heard in Geneva. The social, ethical and theological questions that were raised then continue with us today. Above all these voices asked insistently, "What is the Christian responsibility under these circumstances?" Supporting the *status quo* that maintains stability and harmony at the top while those heaped at the bottom of the many pyramids suffer was no longer acceptable; the South declared it to be sinful and un-Christian. Today the South calls for liberative interdependence as the alternative approach to the pyramidal socio-economic structures that continue to rule the world, as well as the paternalistic, patronizing so-called-aid that generates and perpetuates dependence of the South on the North.

The decolonization process had begun but neo-colonialism had also set in, carrying in its wake the modern language of globalization that continues to sustain the world that the South decried in 1966. Racism may no longer be overt

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[5] Ibid. p.203.

but economic and cultural hegemony still reside in the global North, with a few from Asia claiming a share.

Geneva 66 called for structural changes, not adjustments, and today the South calls for poverty eradication not alleviation. Concern for, and solidarity with, the poor and the marginalized are echoes from this ground-breaking year of radical thinking in the Christian family. And it was groundbreaking because, finally, the voices from the South, from the underside of history, were being heard, debated and allowed to influence decisions of the human community for the common good.

The churches' attitudes to social concerns were changing, no longer were these voices revolutionary in a negative sense. They had become prophetic, calling us to do God's will. Luke 4:1-16 became a mantra. EATWOT in 1983 concluded its conference with the following words.

> The irruption of the poor and oppressed does not automatically lead to the victory of justice. Besides direct acts of violence against them, divisions among the oppressed are manipulated to pit them against one another. As Third World Christians and theologians, we wish to stand with our people in resisting the forces that try to divide, to weaken, and to destroy them. We want to place our energies and theological resources at their service for the greater realization of justice and freedom in our world. This is to participate actively in the liberating mission of Jesus (Luke 4:18-19).[6]

The world's agenda was tabled at Uppsala, and EATWOT continued the tradition of Geneva 66 and Medellin in its theologizing, while insisting that theology and praxis inform each other. Today West-East relations and North-South relations have become global concerns. The implications of the unity of humankind on the one globe is what we are now trying to work out.

The voices of Bola Ige, Samuel Parmar, Richard Shaull and others will be heard at this 40th anniversary. Many who were present have passed on, but others are with us, as are the issues they raised. An Akan proverb enjoins posterity not to simply follow the trails blazed by the forebears but to straighten them out when they are crooked. That is the task we have had before us these past 40 years just as it is now the duty of all succeeding generations, the task to make the world better than we found it.

The 1960s voices declared that development is the name for peace, but that the process may spell disorder rather than the maintenance of the current order.

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[6] Fabella, Virginia & Torres, Sergio eds., *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology,* 1983, Orbis Books, MaryKnoll, NY, p.205.

So we make bold to look the economic order of globalization in the face and attempt to bring about alternatives that are people and earth centred.

Ige said in 1966,

> Peoples of the new nations have a voice and should be heeded ... the revolution our people desire is one that will completely knock out all existing suffocating constitutions, systems and the powers that keep them going. The revolution (should be) global in its dimensions ... nobody can plan this revolution: its timing will be fixed according to the rottenness of the present dispensation.[7]

Compare this with what EATWOT said in 1980.

> Over against this dramatic picture of poverty, oppression, and the threat of total destruction a new consciousness has arisen among the downtrodden. This growing consciousness of the tragic reality of the Third World has caused an irruption of exploited classes, marginalized cultures, and humiliated races. They are bursting from the underside of history into the world long dominated by the West. It is an irruption expressed in revolutionary struggles, political uprisings, and liberation movements. It is an irruption of religious and ethnic groups looking for affirmation of their authentic identity, of women demanding recognition and equality, of youth protesting dominant systems and values. It is an irruption of all those who struggle for full humanity and for their rightful place in history.[8]

We have deleted the language of revolution and in its place inserted liberation and transformation. Whatever the language, the yearning and goal is that human life individually and in community must change to conform with the stature of the Christ and the community of the Triune God.

There is evidence that this is not an empty hope. Richard Shaull said in 1966 that, "ever since the modern world began to take shape ... the churches of the west have absented themselves from the frontlines of human struggle and assumed a conservative attitude towards social change". Today this may be considerably nuanced as churches everywhere have begun to take their current realities seriously and to respond according to the limits of what they understand of the mind of Christ. The rhetoric, at least, leads one to believe that the Church has a new vision of the world and a new concept of human "be-ing" that corresponds to the biblical faith of God being always at work with us. The ahistorical, ontological basis of running human affairs is being replaced as contextuality guides our thinking and doing.

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[7] Michael Kinnamon & Brian E. Cope, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, 1997, WCC Publications, Geneva.

[8] *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology*, Orbis Books, MaryKnoll, NY p. 195.

Today we attempt to stage the future by working towards specific goals.

> What can make a significant contribution is an ongoing reflection on specific questions in the light of the shape of the new man that is coming into existence, as portrayed by the one man Jesus of Nazareth

This, Shaull said, would keep biblical and theological reflection at the centre of the revolutionary struggle.

Today the challenges facing humanity are enormous, and far more complex than the East-West, North-South divides of the sixties. The complexity of what was "the South" means that it is no longer a single unit knitted together. Many issues are more globalized but the structure of haves and have-nots persists and is more pronounced and more visible to all. As I was putting down these thoughts for instance, Ghanaian young people were being recruited for construction work in Qatar.

The world of Uppsala 66 did not factor in the existence of the Arab world, which is, in the popular mind, also equated with the Islamic world. Our religiously pluralistic human community was not an issue in 1966. "Terrorism" had not become a byword and whatever its root causes and objectives, no one today is beyond its effects and implications.

Today neither the North nor the South can ignore this factor of our global life together. Voices from the South, at least from Africa and South Asia, cannot be ignored on this issue by the ecumenical family. It is being presented as an issue of religion and society and we need a wider forum to be effective.

My People Shall Be As A Tree

Forests, labour and idols in Isaiah 44

Nancy Cardoso

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It is not important whether consumption is real or is only imaginary. The objects of our desire become things that we worship. *Robert Kurtz*

1. The fetishization and worship of material goods

It is so difficult to see an idol for what it is when its face is the same as our own! It is so difficult to confront a shadow when it holds us spellbound! It is so difficult to expose the trickery that produces gods unless we know already that the Emperor – or the father, or the lord – is stark naked!

Things, stacked neatly on their shelves. Different makes and brands. Goods by size and weight. Packaging. Different qualities in quantity. Value for money. Hanging displays. What is the relation between their price tag and their practical use? "What are you hungry for?" asks the market as if it were speaking to me in my mother tongue – indecipherable, even to me. I push my supermarket trolley, which gives me my identity in the vanity fair of consumption, and I agonize over the offers – do I really need them, or do I simply want them?

In the logic of the market, relations between seller and buyer use the language of money to determine value, and no longer have any need to be based on the language of need. An abstraction takes concrete form! No one sees this, but everyone is experiencing it – this miracle of transubstantiation! : "[E]ach commodity, regardless of its particular form, matters only as an exchange-value which still needs to be realized as money."[1]

That miracle occurs when individuals take on the role of consumers. In the act of consumption, goods and money kiss, and profit promises to draw the whole

[1] W. F. Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1986, p.15.

of society, one day, into the global market. Or not! For what is important is that profit and value should reproduce and multiply.

It is at one and the same time a complex yet simple operation – highly sensual and completely metaphysical. It deals in realities, things, substances, objects, this and that, which, touched by the language of value, are transformed into subjective needs. Physical concrete objects are stripped of their everyday value, which is determined by their use, and take on a metaphysical value determined by the market.

"The lust for money is the reason why, under capitalist production, the commodity is created in the image of the consumer's desires. Later on this image, divorced from its commodity, is the subject of advertising promotion."[2]

Desire. Love. Image. I want. Seduction. Those do not seem to be words proper to economic discourse, but they are, nonetheless, words that perhaps best express the process of the "fictitious attractiveness of commodities".

Marx says that commodities are in love with money, their prices, casting "wooing glances" at money.[3] He identifies a certain "divine sense for money speculation".[4] Money, he states, is not only the object, but also "the source of the desire for riches".[5]

Whereas, in the world of industrial capitalism, the metaphors of the language of love could be understood merely as a stylistic device that is purely rhetorical, when we analyze the capitalism of the globalized market, we can see that this semantic field provides a vital interpretative key.

Goods desire to be consumed. They need to be selected, purchased. To that end they need to put themselves forward as loveable, desirable. They need to anticipate desire, or even arouse it, by displaying some aesthetic stimulus. They have to stimulate a new form of pleasure, always subject to maintaining the reproductive capacity of capital itself.

Marx presents two mistresses: Cousin Ethics and Cousin Religion.[6] These two cousins are completely obsolete and irrelevant as regards the laws of economics: the morality of political economics is profit and it holds these two cousins

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[2] Ibid., p.24:

[3] K. Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, translated by B. Fowkes, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976, p.205.

[4] K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, translated by S.W. Ryazanskaya, Moscow, Progress Press, at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/ch02_1.htm.

[5] Ibid., at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/ch02_3.htm.

[6] K. Marx, "The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844", in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, Amherst, Prometheus Books, p.120.

in subjection to its own logic by means of an alienating act of trickery. Cousin Church and Cousin Society.

2. Erotic alienation – the body becomes fetish

In the world of the market economy, alienation must be understood, not as lack, but as abundance of promises. Alienation is not absence: it is the promise of a presence. Alienation is not denial of the body, but is exploitation of sensuousness and the erotic to encourage ownership of commodities. It is alienation from the material conditions of labour in favour of existential increase in consumption. Things and bodies lose their immediate materiality and are used by the media to stimulate consumption of goods. The body becomes a commodity. As a result, fetishism functions perfectly well in the discourse of economics, just as it does in the language of pornography. The sexual codes governing physical relationships for the reproduction of life disappear and oppression in its various forms becomes a second nature in the form of brands dedicated to consumption – sexism, heterosexism and racism.

Labour becomes invisible as the body and the erotic become glamourized. The body of the working classes, transformed into a commodity, becomes alienated in eroticized consumption, hovering between desire and possession. The experience of labour as a humanizing culture-creating activity becomes invisible and non-viable. The market vacates the place of production and sings the praises of the market as the place for consumption, where no questions are allowed on reproductive or distributive relationships.

By regarding consumption as the basic foundation of economic activity and denying the conflict between capital and labour, the market distributes wealth unevenly, thus making consumption by all the people an impossibility. The dynamic between promise and possession, desire and ownership, feeds on sensuousness in order to maintain the way in which capital reproduces itself and exercises control.

What some describe as "the existence and function of partly self-regulating dynamic systems regarding human behaviour"[7] is clearly seen by feminists as a reinvention of historic mechanisms of domination. It is just not possible to call the market a "self-regulating mechanism", because the word "self" in "self-regulating" still indicates a particular group (class, gender or race) doing the regulating, which assumes itself to be universal or global.

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[7] H. Assmann, cited in J. M. Sung, 'Novas formas de legitimação da economia: desafios para ética e teologia', *Revista de Estudos da Religião*, No. 3, 2001, p. 106. (http://www.pucsp.br/rever/rv3_2001/p_sung.pdf).

3. Environmental alienation – the world itself becomes a commodity

It requires no great effort to speak of the devastation that capital is constantly and systematically wreaking on our natural environment. The body of the earth is being reduced to "raw materials and is being held hostage to the modern technical/productive, capitalist/industrial apparatus".[8] Its natural resources are running out in face of their being treated as commodities and endless demands by the elites of consumption. Everything is transfigured when touched by capital: land values, water management, forests, seeds, forecasts of the unexpected, climatic cycles. All things are labelled and traded on the international banking system of violent men. They cease to be "materials" or "the body of the earth" and take on supernatural powers as inanimate objects with monetary value, as credit or debit items, denying the relationship of labour and culture with the life force of humankind. This commodification of the natural world opens up a whole new field of wealth accumulation which, apart from not encouraging fair forms of distribution, legitimizes and accelerates policies that exclude the great majority from access to vital interaction with the natural world. The earth, the word "earth" itself, and the way in which we regard it as a part of life: ecology, environmentalism, life systems. All promotional products of small and large NGOs and their mugs advertizing their reforming campaigns:

"Today, behind words such as 'ecology' and 'environment' and even in phrases like 'ecological issues' and 'environmental issues', there is nothing less than the issue of the continued existence of the conditions for social reproduction of certain classes, of certain peoples, and indeed of certain countries."[9]

Alienation and fetishism are not inventions of capitalism and patriarchy. They need to be understood in the context of the creation of myths, cults, incantations and magical rites, which are created to maintain them both, their gods (capital, the father) and their stratagems. Religion also has always reflected economic situations and power relations in society. In this interface between the sensuous language of love and religious discourse, feminist theology perceives, not so much a set of comparisons or stylistic devices, but rather a space for fundamental analysis and criticism of the relations between capital, the market and patriarchy.

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[8] M. Lowy, *Marx, Engels e a ecologia*, Margem Esquerda 3, Boitempo, São Paulo, 2004, p.101.

[9] F. Chesnais and C. Serfati, *"Ecologia" e condições físicas da reprodução social: alguns fios condutores marxistas, p.1, at* http://www.unicamp.br/cemarx/criticamarxista/16chesnais.pdf.

This "fetishization" of material goods confers a god-like status on money, things and the market, providing a metaphysical foundation for bourgeois culture with its rites and ceremonies, which requires legitimacy for itself and constant reification of the needs of those dominated. This aesthetic process, which takes possession of the body, and its creative, inventive, sensuous and erotic capacities, co-opts Christian theology, its exegesis and hermeneutics, its self-sacrificial and self-denial mechanisms, so as to create an evangelistic language declaring that class conflict does not exist and that there is no alternative to the market if human life is to be fully realized.

In order to expose the hermeneutical nature of political and economic relationships and open our eyes to the mechanisms that set up self-regulating idols and rituals, we need a theology that is capable of abandoning any idea of an invisible self-regulating hand (whether dogmatic or exegetical) and will sign up definitively to the cause of cultural creation, an aesthetic incarnating finite materialities, a theology that rebels in the face of any respectable system that domesticates what presents itself as "liberation". [10]

4. Isaiah 44:9-20, and the production of sacred objects

All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind, they are ignorant, to their own shame. Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit him nothing? He and his kind will be put to shame; craftsmen are nothing but men. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and infamy. The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in the form of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. It is man's fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire." From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my god." They know nothing, they understand noth-

[10] M. Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, SCM Press, London, 2004, p.82.

ing; their eyes are plastered over so that they cannot see, and their minds closed so that they cannot understand. No-one stops to think, no-one has the knowledge or understanding to say, "Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?" He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?"

Here we see individuals and their world. In the case of this text, the individuals are men, and men qualified in specific skills (blacksmiths, foresters, carpenters, sculptors, cooks), which were probably very specialized skills at that time (mid-sixth century BCE, in the period of the Babylonian empire).[11] The world is described with its mineral and vegetable resources, iron and wood, which are combined for various uses. The world consists of land and water, farm and forest, rain and fire.

These are relationships formed between individuals and the world in order to meet human need through technology, and these relationships form a dynamic social structure involving many simultaneous activities: quarrying stone, making an axe or hammer, forging metal, planing wood, measuring out, marking with compasses, planting tress, felling trees, burning their wood, turning wood into charcoal, into tools, into heat, into fuel for cooking, into light, into a dwelling, into an object, into a statue. Eating, keeping warm, making a home, lighting it, decorating it – it is a picture of the world and human activity in it.

However, in Isaiah 44:9-20, in this list of tasks, in this description of physical activities and their purpose, the author sees as it were a labyrinth of confusion: *He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself...* (Isa. 44:20).

This text brings together the material relationships between, on the one hand, the world and its people, their needs and their skills and, on the other, the power stratagems that produce an ideology of the power of empire, based on those relationships, but also concealing them. There are two themes running through the text: the theme of images of the world of nature and the world of work and, specially, the theme of control mechanisms over the world of nature and the world of work, which seems to have been a basic concern of the theologies of resistance confronting imperial policies (as in the creation narratives, the mythical interpretations of the Flood, the counter-interpretations of mythical gardens as in Genesis and the Song of Songs, and in the discussion of power in the Book of Job and Ecclesiastes).

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[11] J. L. Sicre, *Profetismo em Israel*, Vozes, Petrópolis, 2002, p.311.

5. The removal of labour and those who live by their labour from the material world

The text of Isaiah 44:9-20 condemns the process by which labour is removed from the material world and uses words such as madness, shame, delusion and lie to describe the process by which images of the sacred are made to render invisible the performance of human tasks and the cultural exchange sustaining all human activity.

Smiths and carpenters were by the nature of their work, which was the high technology of the day, close to the power centres in Middle Eastern antiquity. That gave rise to prophetic condemnation of the separation of their specific activities from the whole range of other activities by which human life is maintained (cooking, heating, building, etc.).

6. The rape of the forests – the removal of the earth from the material world

The second form of domination aspired to by empire and its images is control of the world of nature and its removal from material reality. The text of Isaiah 44, in describing the use and manufacture of the products of the forest, clearly condemns this way of exploiting the earth. The process of making images and sacred objects renders invisible the domination and control of the forest and its wood, both basic materials for the continuation of life in antiquity (and still today!). Religion comes to be one of the forms legitimizing the control and domination of empire over the resources of the forest.

The text mentions cedar, cypress, oak and pine. These trees were used in the manufacturing processes of life and of sacred objects in the form of:

- Charcoal, both for working with metal, and for food preparation, lighting and heating;
- Material for making instruments and tools;
- Material for building dwellings;
- Material for making sculptures and images.

This variety of uses to which products of the forest can be put shows how essential it was for empires to control woods and forests as an important economic mechanism. In the biblical narrative the forests and their living beings are linked with power mechanisms, both of the temple and the royal palace.

It was said of King Solomon that, among his activities as a wise man and a scientist, *He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls* (1 Kings 4:33).

The forest is thus reduced to wood, and wood is reduced to the forms in which it is used. Raw materials and labour are thus rendered invisible by the process of idol-making. Where there was the world, an image demanding worship is set up. Where there was labour, an idol demanding fear and sacrifice is set up.

This process of using religion to remove nature from the material world is a response to the essential need to hold on to power. The Isaiah text identifies this mechanism in the Babylonian empire and prophetically criticizes the empire's ideological trickery.

Conclusion

Study of ancient forms of imperialism is essential for understanding the structural nature of empire as a geopolitical macro-model and for exposing the cultural/religious trickery legitimizing it that aims to penetrate all levels of society as an essential mechanism by which power reproduces itself and makes itself acceptable.

Economic power is usually exercised through ownership of things. By contrast, political power and military power (which always go together!) are exercised as power over people's bodies. And ideological power is exercised over people's minds, by generating and disseminating ideas, symbols, visions of the world and practical advice by means of words and images. (Ideological power is extremely dependent on the nature of human beings as animals with the power of speech). [12]

Second Isaiah's condemnation of the imperial mechanisms of control of labour and of the natural world show an amazing capacity on the part of prophecy to analyze and criticize the trickery by which imperial power reproduces itself.

This confrontation with the religious form of alienation of creative labour and the environment continues in prophecy as a tension in the many descriptions of the new heavens and the new earth. Third Isaiah gives a vision of his hope:

No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands (Isaiah 65:22).

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[12] N. Bobbio, *Os intelectuais e o Poder*, Unesp, São Paulo, 1996, p.11.

Today great corporations control land, water and expertise in the planting of trees in vast reforestation projects. They still hold to the capitalist model at the cost of exploitation of labour and criminal seizure of nature. The world has become charcoal. In the charcoal kilns, slave labour is being reinvented. Anything can be consumed in order to keep the god Capital alive.

This confrontation with capital that is destroying forests and communities is crying out for a prophetic voice that will inspire visions of a new economic model that will change the system of production and generate new forms and sources of energy.

Eco-socialism entails a radical break with material capitalist civilization. In this perspective, the socialist project does not only envision a new society and a new mode of production, but also a new paradigm of civilization. [13]

Forest, labour and bread – God with us.

Translated from the Portuguese, WCC Language Service

[13] M. Lowy, op. cit., p.102.

Geneva 1966 and Contemporary Concerns for Ecological and Gender Justice

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The Geneva conference sought to promote collaborative and inter-disciplinary engagement and dialogue between theologians and representatives or experts in other fields – the human and social sciences on contemporary issues (of that time) in church and society. Its aims, as stated in the report, were primarily the examination of the possible implications of a) the advancement of technologies in the contemporary world; b) the liberation of peoples from a variety of forms of domination; c) comprehensive analyses of the concerns and expectations of full life of the newly liberated peoples; d) exploring and understanding the "increasing divide between the rich and poor countries"; e) the conflicting interests and power struggles of nations and the ways these concerns or issues affected Christian witness and or discipleship in the modern world.

The purpose of the conference was to understand what the implications for social thought and action were and also to assist the WCC to formulate for deliberation by the churches, proposals for the strengthening and renewal of the churches' ministry in society. In addition, it was to enable the WCC to formulate policies which would "give expression to a Christian concern for human solidarity, justice and freedom in a world of revolutionary changes."[1] It has already been noted that the agenda of the Geneva conference was to a large extent influenced by the challenge from Asia and Latin America [and Africa], "Calling to question the theological, economic and political assumptions underlying the concept of responsible society."[2]

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[1] Thomas, M.M and Abrecht, 1967: p.6.

[2] The Role of the World Council of Churches in International Affairs, WCC, International Relations, 1999, p.13.

Looking at the report of the conference and subsequent articles which sought to understand its impact and contributions to ecumenical thought, one can observe that there were a number of pertinent issues which it addressed and which still continue to form the basis and work of the WCC today. It would seem, however, that there are other theological and social concerns which have emerged in recent times, which were not or only nominally addressed by the 1966 Geneva conference, issues which have or ought to become central to ecumenical life and social thought.

I shall address two of these key issues that were not fully addressed by the Geneva conference but have become central to the work and life of the WCC and the ecumenical family at large. The first is gender justice and the concerns and contributions of women to theology and the life and work of the WCC. The second issue is the question of the threat to the web of life which has increasingly become a thematic area of concern for justice and the articulation of theology in our lives today. The vision for gender and ecological justice is rooted in the analyses of these issues. In particular, it is related to the pursuit of justice for women and men, of all those on the underside of history, politics, socio-economics, and working for the justice of the ecology.

Women and feminist theological concerns for gender justice in ecumenical life and thought

The concern and search for gender justice in the church and society stirred the evolution and articulation of feminist, womanist, African women's and *Mujerista* theologies by a variety of women and men in the church and society. Nyambura Njoroge points out that these theologies enabled women "to develop their political as well as their religious consciousness in the struggle for liberation and freedom from patriarchy, hierarchy, sexism, racism and economic exploitation".[3] They also made it possible for women and men to express their experiences of God as God is known to us in the world in which we live. In this way, God was explained "as one who is for all women together with all men and for justice and harmony in the whole creation".[4] The key inspiration for these theologies was the pursuit for liberation from all forms of dehumanization and degradation, as well as the proclamation of the full integrity of all God's earth and creation.

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[3] Njoroge, J. Nyambura *Reclaiming our heritage of Power: Discovering our Theological Voices*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzberg, 2002 p.45.

[4] Letty Russell, quoted in Njoroge, Ibid, p.45.

Feminist theologies continue to articulate justice for women and men in the church and in society. In collaboration with other social institutions and agencies, the feminist movement (in all its variety) has continued to influence the ethos and the work done by churches and social agencies. This has been pursued with the understanding that justice for women in the church and in society is not simply a matter for women alone, "but continually requires the active participation of the whole church".[5] The imperative to affirm the dignity of women and to uphold women's rights is not an obligation deriving from our requirements to live harmonious lives as citizens of the world, it is grounded in our Christian understanding that all "human beings are made in the image of God and deserve equal rights, protection and care".[6] This can be seen in the renewed attention to the biblical, theological, ecclesiological and Christological resources which affirm men and women, and God's creation. Previously these had been neglected in ecumenical social thought and praxis.

A vital element that emerged from women's concerns for justice in the church and society was the integrity of the web of life and the affirmation that other creatures and the earth are inextricably bound to humanity, and the affirmation that our understanding of what it means to be Christian ought not to be developed separately from this. Women theologians and those in solidarity with their insights have reminded the church that God does not exist outside and apart from the web of life. To a large extent this differed to the prevailing or mainstream theological and ecumenical thought, which tended to be anthropocentric and emphasize the uniqueness of humanity over and above other created beings. These insights have generated theologies which take seriously our daily immersion in the web of life as embodied persons and have encouraged us to promote wholeness in our life and thought.

Theologies which have taken seriously the concern for justice for women and men in the church and society have analyzed the prevailing descriptions of God as proclaimed by the scriptures, church liturgies and symbols, theologies and praxis and related them to our daily understanding and experiences of God. For many years the church continued to proclaim an imagery of God which was unhelpful to many members of the body of Christ. For instance, God has tended to be seen in masculine terms. The church, and also sometimes ecumenical social thought, have maintained this overemphasis on the male imagery of God, as opposed to other understandings of God even when this alienates many in the church and in society. This has thus generated essentialist and non-creative ways of thinking about God. Feminist theologies have

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[5] WCC: *Together on The Way: A statement on Human Rights*, p.2.

[6] Ibid, p. 6.

shown the limitations of such conceptualizations of God. They have also noted that when the dominant images of God are made normative, they obscure the diverse experiences and understandings of God in our world today.

In addition theologies which centre on gender and women's concerns for justice in the church and in society have also highlighted the importance of using a variety of images, descriptions and metaphors of God which promote wholeness for all creatures and people of God. Theologians such as Sallie McFague have pointed to the need to go beyond static, disabling and discriminatory imagery and thinking about God.[7] They have encouraged the church and Christians to creatively utilize other ways of thinking about God including the use of metaphorical language which promotes more creative understanding of God.

In its thought and praxis the WCC has to a large extent been in solidarity with women and with gender justice. It has affirmed women's dignity and encouraged the churches to explore and promote justice in ecclesial and societal spheres. It has also demonstrated this through the attempt to promote the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women. However, in spite of a variety of advocacy strategies for gender justice in the church and society, there has not been great progress towards effective articulation of women's human rights within the churches.

It is my personal conviction that recognition of the full dignity of women in the church also requires the full participation of women in ordained ministry. If this is rejected, I see the dignity of women undermined. The exclusion of concerns and insights raised by women, particularly from feminist theologies, are often ignored. There are of course many examples of women themselves taking up these issues within churches that do not accept ordination of women or other forms of the ministry by women.

Given the complexities within the ecumenical movement and social thinking, where on the one side there are those who support and affirm the importance of engendering justice in leadership, theological and ecumenical thought and praxis, and on the other there are those who reject the affirmation of the full dignity of women and their full participation in the life and work of the church, questions must be raised as to why there are some churches, church leaders and theologies which still have difficulties with open discussion on issues that include women, and why churches and some individuals continue to exclude women from theological work. It will be important for the churches

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[7] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1982, see for example p.2 and pp.145ff.

and the WCC to explore the ways in which churches can address these questions, especially in church contexts of hostility towards justice for women. Women need to know the commitment and the extent to which the churches and the WCC are willing to overcome the exclusion of women in the church. I believe it is also imperative for the churches to be open to dialogue and transformation so that the authentic and faithful expression of God's ministry does not disenfranchize women from wholeness and from the living out of their faith.

Threats to the web of life - the search for ecological justice

There are numerous practices and ideologies which pose threats to the web of life today. These range from climate change, pollution, "global warming, depletion of natural resources, and loss of biodiversity loom ever larger; for instance, we will lose 30 to 70 percent of the world's biodiversity in a time span of 20 to 30 years."[8] As this statement implies, threats to the web of life are also inextricably bound to the decisions societies make about the earth's resources and the policies which guide the use or stewardship of these. I shall specifically focus on the intersection between ecology, economy and power and their influence or implications to the threats to the web of life, particularly on the environment.

The 1966 conference explored the effects of technologies on life and generally had a positive view of the role of technologies for the advancement of humanity; it could not have anticipated the threats to life which would come from the desire to own life, life-forms and the means to life and of making them subject to the market economy. The granting of intellectual property rights, in particular patenting rights to life forms such as micro-organisms, and the products and processes associated with biotechnologies, has given rise to a situation where individuals, corporations, institutions and groups of people can own as private property or intellectual property rights to entire strains or species of organisms. This has also endorsed the idea that all the earths' resources and products can be considered as human inventions and has led to increased interest by biotechnology or pharmaceutical companies to deepen the search (bioprospecting and biopiracy) and the consolidation of ownership of complex life forms including animal, plant and human life. This has led to the patenting of animal, plant and human life forms. For example, in 1988 the US Patents and

[8] Alternative Globalisation: Addressing Peoples and Earth, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2005, p.9.

Trademarks office allowed the first patent on an animal life-form, the Harvard Onco-mouse which had been engineered and/or manipulated for increased susceptibility to cancer. This set a precedent for patenting genetically modified animals and thus raises ethical and theological questions on, "whether animal and cells can be corporate property".[9] This further highlights theological concerns about the extent of our participation in the web of life as co-creators with God.

A worrying aspect of the commoditization of life and its threat to creation and the web of life has been the ownership of the components of human life itself. This is disturbing because for a long time efforts were made by social, civil and ecclesial communities to counter the commoditization of human beings, historically associated with slavery, systemic racism, white supremacy and the exploitation of black peoples. The churches have challenged the commoditization of life which takes place through mechanisms such as trafficking of women, men and children, the sale of human genes, tissues and organs in the market place, yet these evils persist. The feminist economist Athena Peralta from the Philippines and many others in the church and society have sought through the WCC to work on and address these issues.[10] The use of market transactions as conduits for the ownership of components of human life is apparent in the patenting of the cell line of the American leukaemia patient John Moore by the University of California. Moore had been a patient at the university. He had a surgical removal of a cancerous spleen following which he learnt that the university had applied and been granted patent rights on a cell line taken from his spleen without his consent. He also learnt from the ruling of the California supreme court that he was not going to be given back his cells and he was not entitled to control over his body parts after they had been removed from his body.

The ownership of life forms by individuals and/or institutions (particularly biotechnology companies) also extends to plant life. This is aided by international intellectual property rights, in particular article 27 of the agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property rights of the WTO which compels WTO members to allow patents on all forms of technologies (including biotechnologies) as well as on micro-organisms.

The subjection of the web of life and life forms to property rights and to the market economy is according to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, an imposition of west-

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[9] "DNA Patents Create Monopolies on Living organisms", The Council for Responsible Genetics, 2000, p.2.

[10] Athena K. Peralta, "Trafficking and Trade in women and neoliberal glaobalizaiton", in *Reformed World* Vol. 56, No. 1, p.12ff.

ern legal regimes on indigenous peoples and other communities, which is the basis of many economic, ecological and social-political problems that the web of life and human beings continue to face in the present. The imposition of the intellectual property rights regimes on ecological resources and life forms she argues, is particularly exacerbated by the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Regimes (hereafter TRIPS) of the world trade organization. Tauli-Corpuz states that for indigenous peoples, the issue or problem is not just about western laws, but the essence of the laws which are generally the embodiment of western legal philosophy, norms, values, and mindset which are contrary to many indigenous people's/communities, cosmologies and values. For example she suggests that the promotion of exclusive ownership and alienability of life-forms, which is embedded in TRIPS and is compulsory for all members of the WTO, will have to be internalized and imbibed by many people even when it goes against their usual practice of making available such knowledge for the common good. It will also undermine the sense of being of many peoples whose identity and survival depends on common solidarity and the sharing of resources, knowledge and skills for the survival, flourishing and nurture of humanity and the earth. With the TRIPS agreement, many communities which have survived and thrived on sharing knowledge freely will have to protect themselves so that the expropriation of the means to life "can be avoided".[11]

The inclusion of the web of life and life-forms into the market economy undermines ecological justice and raises a number of questions and challenges for Christian and church witness in our world today. It also influences our sense of personhood, ecology, social relations and being Christians in our diverse contexts and experiences. To what extent do we participate in life as co-creators and what are our responsibilities to one another and to life itself? To what extent does our participation in the web of life have a positive or negative impact on creation? To what extent do we relate to the earth and the rest of creation in a way that is grounded in our Christian understanding and belief, that all human beings are created in the image of God and all creatures of the earth and the earth are created beautiful by God?

The threat to the web of life requires that we develop theological and ethical norms and values (not in the prescriptive sense) which inform the ways we relate to and promote the care and protection of the earth and the web of life. The threat should inspire us to develop criteria for relating harmoniously to

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[11] Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, *Indigenous Peoples and Intellectual property rights (IPR) TRIPS and potential impacts on Indigenous Peoples*, Baguio City: Tebtebba Foundation, Inc. The Indigenous Peoples International Centre for Policy Research and Education. Also refer to http: // www. Skyinet.net >

the earth and other creatures in order to address the challenges. It calls us in similar spirit to the way theologians at the 1966 Geneva conference sought to dialogue with people of other faiths and other disciplines, to enhance our current understanding and seek strategies around these issues. How we pay attention to the implications and effects of the threat to the web of life to the least among us is a key challenge of our own time.

In its own work, the WCC through the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation programme has affirmed the connection between justice, peace and ecological sustainability. It has continued to analyze and reflect on justice, peace and creation in their interrelatedness, and promote values and practices that make for a culture of peace and to work towards a culture of solidarity with young people, women, indigenous peoples and racially and ethnically oppressed peoples. At the Vancouver assembly, the WCC encouraged church members to publicly commit to addressing environmental concerns as part of a common effort to promote peace and the integrity of creation, that become known as the JPIC process. In 1988 the WCC launched a programme which sought among other things to address climate change. The WCC has also called for a just participatory and sustainable society. It has also attended to the environmental issues in the context of the north-south divide between the rich and the poor.

The WCC however, has been criticized by scholars such as Santmire that although it has theologically embedded concern for ecological justice in ecumenical life and thought, and has equipped many of its members to enter into serious dialogue with people of other faiths relating to ecology and ecological justice, it has "not addressed the liabilities of both the reconstructionists and apologists".[12] Santmire suggests that many theologians have sought to address global environmental crises and ecological injustices using anthropological frameworks which emphasize the idea of good stewardship. This approach, he argues is not helpful and does not inspire Christians to relate the concern for ecological justice to their faith because it does not emphasize human relations to the earth and the web of life with a sense of awe, wonder and respect but from the perspective of stewardship. He says that stewardship conceptualizes Christian relations with the web of life in ways that are too functional, manipulative, operational and sometimes too tied up with money to the extent that it makes us feel as if we need to manage the earth and the earth's resources. This he suggests fails to connect with the core convictions of the Christian communities. For me this suggests that ecumenical social and ecological thought ought to embrace elements which are grounded in the vision for a

[12] Paul H.Santmire, "In God's Ecology", in *The Christian Century*, December 13, 2000, p.1300.

responsible *ecclesia* and which takes seriously the formative influences of scripture, tradition, ecclesial community, and Christology. These ought to be embraced in the life of the Christian community as a whole, in worship, in the community of faith, in such a way as to embed them in the theological matrix of churches' spiritual and ethical praxis in the world.

Grounding ecological justice holistically in the Christological, ecclesial and other facets of being church would entail strategies and theological insights to be in conversation with other constructive social structures and thinkers of our time. It would continue to affirm that God lives in history and in all things, and that God is not only interested in the well-being of humans but of the whole earth and all other beings. This would enable us as Christians to act in humility and to understand our call to live as creatures of the earth who are not above other creatures, so that life can flourish. It would encourage us to continue the commitment made by the WCC in its statement at the eighth assembly, in Harare, that "We give thanks to God for the gift of life and for the dignity God has bestowed on all creation."[13]

Furthermore, it will encourage us to pursue substantial improvements in the churches and also in societies, particularly with regard to international laws and standards which disable the integrity of all life. In the spirit of the Geneva conference, which sought to understand and seek justice in times of revolution, the search for ecological justice will require the voices of justice to continue the search for justice and the respect for the dignity of life for those on the underside of power in the church and in society such as women, children, indigenous peoples, those uprooted and economically disabled as well as those who are discriminated against in multiple ways including environmental injustices.

Conclusion

The diverse worldviews, cultural and intellectual heritage, socio-economic and political experiences of Christians from different and differing contexts provide constructive resources that are very relevant for developing and improving theological reflections on ecological and gender justice. Such diverse experience is also invaluable to the promotion of Christian witness of faith in God and in developing responses to the challenges posed by our contemporary contexts, including the technological developments in today's world. Given the value of this resource, the churches need to be diligent in our affirmation of

[13] *Together on The Way*, a statement on human rights, WCC, op. cit., p.2.

justice for women, men and creation, based on our theological understanding that God created humanity in God's image, and also on God's declaring the goodness of all creation. This requires that we work in partnership with the wider community and civil society in overcoming gender injustices, injustices against minorities and their epistemologies or spiritualities, overcoming violence in secular and ecclesial communities, to celebrate our humanity by acknowledging and living with respect and responsibility towards overcoming the threats to the web of life. Thus we would appreciate God's love as embracing the whole of creation, and recognize the infinite beauty, wholeness and eternal harmony of creation and ourselves, and the unfolding of God's new creation in our history today.

WCC Central Committee

Geneva, 30 August-6 September 2006

Report of the Moderator

Rev. Dr Walter Altmann

Fraternal sharing in a fellowship of faith

1. As a central committee we are at the beginning of a journey which will be, I hope and trust, a common journey of gratitude for God's marvellous gift of unity. This common journey arises from a beautiful, though difficult, ecumenical commitment which has brought us together, in spite of the many differences that exist among us. Perhaps this beauty is to some extent there, not despite our differences, but rather because of the mutual enrichment we derive from them.

2. This first report of the moderator will have more of a testimonial character than the tenor of an analysis of the world we live in. It will make references to my own context, but it will not attempt to draw a comprehensive picture of the ecumenical scenery. Yet I do hope to raise paradigmatically one or more key issues the ecumenical movement, and therefore the WCC itself, confronts today. Leo Tolstoy once wrote (I'm quoting from memory) that if you are capable of knowing your own village well, you are capable of becoming a citizen of the world. One of the great authors from the country I come from, João Guimarães Rosa, wrote something similar when, in his masterpiece *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, he resumed the existentialist analysis of a lonely inhabitant of remote spaces with the sentence "*o sertão é o mundo*" ("the hinterland is the world"). These two authors, one from Russia and the other from Brazil, have much to teach with their similar insights. They come from very dissimilar contexts and tell quite different stories – yet, they have the same perception of our existence in the world.

3. This report is intended to be a sharing of faith and hope, in the expectation that you yourselves will join me in such sharing in the dialogue that will follow. For the very first task we have to perform does not consist in debating and adopting a new programme for the WCC, although the greatest part of our agenda and time will be devoted precisely to trying to cope with the challenge

of establishing a programme faithful to the decisions of the assembly, responsible in its stewardship of the resources available while getting accustomed to the fact that they are not as abundant as we might wish, and strengthening the witness and service (*martyria* and *koinonia*) of our churches.

4. Our primary and fundamental task will consist in re-establishing between ourselves the deep bonds of fellowship that characterized the gathering we experienced during the assembly in Porto Alegre, in worship and Bible study, in ecumenical conversations and dialogue at the *mutirão*, and yes, also in our assembly committees and plenary sessions. At our very first meeting as the central committee, in Porto Alegre, right after the closure of the assembly, we actually did not have the time for this exercise of fraternal sharing, and perhaps we were not in the mood to do so, either, under the heavy weight of the important decisions we then had to take in the course of one evening session. However, we owe it to ourselves and to the churches we represent to live out as a central committee the fellowship that the Holy Spirit is constantly willing to concede us and foster among us.

Recalling the 9th Assembly

5. I speak now from the perspective of the host churches. The preparation of the 9th assembly of the WCC was a work of many hands. It was also a unique opportunity for our congregations in Brazil to serve as a protagonist of the ecumenical movement in a wider sense. They responded well to the call for solidarity with the WCC in several areas of preparation of the assembly. The preparation itself was truly an ecumenical "*mutirão*" – that Portuguese word you know all too well by now – hundreds of people offered time and strength to show how Latin American and Brazilian churches were committed to build with the WCC the appropriate space for the ecumenical movement to meet, pray and discuss its own future.

6. During the months of preparation, a question we asked ourselves was how we could be supportive in interacting with our guests and yet also be protagonists in the process of reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement. Could what we had been experiencing in our own context be helpful to brothers and sisters living in different contexts? The main motivation given to encourage people to join the work was that every one of them, in his or her own context, would have something to contribute to this global endeavour. That sort of contribution is also what we wished to offer from the experience of our churches. Each of our confessions and expressions of faith cherish vital elements that are present in various forms in the other partner churches that are gathered in the

fellowship of the WCC. The common prayer and the lively music at the assembly, in their beautiful variety, serve as a symbol of these riches. We tried to convey to people how wonderful it would be for us to experience together diverse forms of celebration from so many churches and different confessional families; we longed to share, as well, our way of expressing the one faith we have in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. After the assembly, people involved in organizing the event described their participation as an experience of great spiritual fellowship, a space for meeting and exchange, an opportunity for dialogue with the whole ecumenical family.

7. In a sense the assembly did not end for us on February 23. The ecumenical choir, for example, has met for church events since then. A few weeks ago, at the beginning of this month, the National Council of Christian Churches in Brazil (CONIC) promoted a seminar to discuss and evaluate the ecclesiological consequences of the 9th Assembly of the WCC for the churches in our country. The seminar took place in Guarulhos, São Paulo, under the theme "God, in your grace, transform our country". You can perceive the undertone: a reference to the deep corruption scandals that have come to the surface of the political landscape lately in Brazil. But we also talked about relations among our churches, the religious scenery in Brazil, the necessity and possibilities for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, and the practical implications of the assembly's document *Called to be the One Church.* It was an inspiring event, but it did not consist entirely of grounds for rejoicing. On the contrary, we also experienced great pain, since we met under the heavy shadow of the decision taken by the Convention of the Brazilian Methodist Church in July to withdraw from "organizations with the presence of the Roman Catholic Church and non-Christian groups", thus dropping its membership from CONIC. (This grave decision seems to me to be symbolic of the difficulties faced by the ecumenical movement today, not only in Brazil. But I'll come back to that later.) At the same time, I express my joy at the fact that the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil, fraternally present at the assembly in Porto Alegre, has applied for membership in the WCC, a matter which will be taken up at this central committee meeting.

8. In this context, we reminded and recommitted ourselves at the CONIC seminar to the vision of fellowship as expressed in the words of the Canberra Statement, confirmed in Porto Alegre: "Our churches have affirmed that the unity for which we pray, hope and work is a *koinonia* given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and

reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation." (*Called to be the One Church*).

"An accounting for the hope that is in us"

9. Let me place this report in the context of the biblical motto: "In your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you." (1 Peter 3:15, NRSV) Our task is to give an accounting for the hope that is in us, as the apostle says, and for this task we are called always to be ready. Thus, we meet as a fellowship of hope. I am sure we are keenly aware of the responsibilities we have taken upon ourselves in accepting nomination and then being elected to the central committee. We see it as part of a calling from God, to which we aim to respond and, with God's help, to correspond. We have services to render on behalf of our churches. Each one of us probably also has plans and, beyond our plans, dreams of a WCC that is truly a privileged instrument of the wider ecumenical movement. Each one of us responds to a calling as members of the people of God, members elected by our churches at a worldwide ecumenical assembly.

10. We certainly do all this with the assurance of Jesus' promise to his disciples: "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) I repeat: We constitute a fellowship of hope. When speaking about hope, in one sense we refer to it as a natural gift, a universal feature of all humankind. In fact, our lives and the history of humankind are driven by hope. The hope that moves us may be a set of expectations we have and nurture in regard to the future. Parents hope their children will grow well physically and spiritually into maturity, will succeed as persons and as professionals, will treasure values at least similar to their own. Peoples and nations expect better conditions for the lives of their citizens and deeper fraternal relations among them. How dry and cold are the proposals and projects of political parties, for example, when they cannot convey to the people any hope, they don't share any dreams and have no vision of a more humane future! Humanity longs for peace, justice and integrity of creation, to use the name of one of the historically most significant programmatic areas of the WCC.

11. And yet our hope is permanently challenged by a tremendous array of forces and events that intend to destroy it, apparently unmasking the best hopes as naïve and unrealistic expectations. Our hopes can be categorized by the word "utopia". And we know all too well the possible double-meaning of the word utopia. On one side, it consists of far more than mere future events

which might take place or not but primarily highlight that inner force which compels us to move on towards a goal we have set or projected. On the other hand, it may also be perceived as an expression of so high a standard that it is found to be totally unrealistic (and even dangerous, because illusory). It will never be realized. Our historic and daily experiences give ample evidence to the latter failing. Yet humanity cannot live without hope. And so we find ourselves standing in the tension between our motivating vision and, at the same time, the temptation to impose our vision upon others who may have visions and hopes different from ours.

12. The harsh contrast between these two ways of experiencing and dealing with hope leads us inevitably to the question of the reasons we have for our hope, as the apostle states in 1 Peter. He exhorts us to be ready to give an accounting of the hope we have. Is there an ultimate hope which can prevail vis-à-vis the hard realities of this life?

13. Let us suspend this question for a while, and consider further the dramatic contrast between our expectations and standards of goodness and the sobering reality of disillusionment and evil in this world. Let us face these matters in relation to our churches and the ecumenical movement. Don't we often feel the necessity of crying out loudly, or within our hearts, at the contradictions in Christian history and in the life of our churches? Mission is intended as witness to God's love incarnate in Jesus Christ and to the power of the Holy Spirit leading people to faith and love. But mission has also been conceived and developed as an instrument of human power leading to or legitimizing crusades, conquest, colonization and oppression. There are so many examples of love being demonstrated to the point of martyrdom, in the giving of one's own life for the other's sake; on the other hand, tragically, there are also so many examples of marginalizing and even excluding others from the life of the church. (Let us remember, to cite a few instances, lay people, women, people of disadvantaged ethnic groups, sick persons or those with disabilities, the impoverished, for all of whom so often there has been no dignified place in our churches). Churches have blessed wars, or even waged wars, legitimized slavery and racism, abandoned the poor to their terrible fate.

14. However, by no means should we limit ourselves to these extremely dramatic and tragic events and processes. The contradictions between "noble ideals" and "harsh realities" may also be found in the best of our endeavours. Allow me to mention one example from the history of the ecumenical movement. We are approaching the 100th anniversary celebration of the Edinburgh Mission Conference. As we know all too well, its vision of a common Christian witness to Christ decisively shaped the ecumenical movement in the 20th

century, alongside other similar visions of common action by the churches in the social arena, and of overcoming doctrinal divergences in a process of dialogue, study and mutual understanding. There is no need to recall the many positive achievements in all these areas over the course of these hundred years. In many, many places the relations among the churches have improved considerably, as compared to previous centuries. Nevertheless, are we really closer to the stated goal of visible unity within the Christian family? Cynics could well claim that the so-called "century of the Church" or the "century of ecumenism", as many have named the 20th century, has failed. And we ourselves, who by no means share the perspective of cynicism, do feel the necessity of reflecting about the "reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement", and since Harare we have looked into the future on the basis of a renewed "common understanding and vision" of the ecumenical movement. Finally, in engaging ourselves in a "global forum" we hope to widen the basis for the ecumenical movement and give it a new impetus.

The challenge of religious pluralism

15. The Moderator's report is not the place for presenting and discussing the programme areas of the WCC. At best, it may draw attention to key issues the ecumenical movement (and the WCC) is facing. Of course, the ecumenical agenda is vast: theology, mission, public voice. We need to continue with perseverance our dialogue on theological subjects, like questions of ecclesiology and ethics. Our understanding and commitment to mission must remain always among our primary concerns. "Integrity of creation" is one of our key words, "peace and justice" another broad area. Questions like the illegitimate debt of countries from the South have a prominent place in the agenda of churches in the Latin American context from which I come. We are certainly concerned and deeply disappointed with the failure of negotiations on international trade in the Doha round of talks, and with the continuation of protectionism and subsidies by wealthy countries in relation to agricultural goods. We are troubled by the fact that the international community is not willing or does not find ways to strengthen the existing multilateral organizations and instruments. We feel anger at the unashamed recourse to violence and war as means of attempting to solve conflicts (or to impose their own order upon others). The suffering of innocent people cries to heaven, as we have witnessed again in the Middle East and elsewhere. Fostering a culture of peace and calling for peaceful resolution of conflicts acquires more and more relevance and urgency.

16. All these issues – and others besides – could and should be expanded as essential parts of the ecumenical agenda. But I must limit myself here in the interest of time. However, I do wish to single out the question of religious pluralism and to make a few observations. In many parts of the world, the religious scene today is characterized by an intense mobility and growing diversity. Without doubt this is the case in Latin America and the Caribbean. Pluralism and increasing diversity are also to be noted when we look at Christianity itself. For example, over the centuries Latin America was considered to be a homogeneous region, at least in religious terms. Here "homogeneous" meant Roman Catholic. Today, the region is increasingly defined by its religious pluralism. An astounding shift is taking place. In Brazil a comparison between the census of 1991 and that of 2000, just nine years later, shows that the percentage of Roman Catholics decreased from 83 % to 73.5 % of the population, while the "evangelicals", a category including members of all Protestant and Pentecostal churches, increased their share from 9 % to 15 %. Roughly two-thirds of these are Pentecostals or neo-Pentecostals, with extraordinary growth in the last decades and organized in many, many independent churches.

17. This is the picture within Christianity. At the same time, we observe another process developing more silently but with profound implications. That is the rediscovery of the religious expressions of indigenous communities and especially those with origins in the spirituality of Afro-descendants, religious expressions that were previously practised clandestinely without the general knowledge or interest of the larger society, often to avoid persecution or discrimination on religious grounds. Statistically the figures in the census are open to interpretation, due to a de facto double religious allegiance that the census does not detect; declarations of personal preference tend to concentrate on the more "official" religious option, even when the respondent's religious practice is a different one. Nonetheless, marked change is underway.

18. We may be surprised at first sight by the steady increase of people who declare themselves as "without religion". Their numbers have increased in Brazil between 1991 to 2000, from 4.8 % to 7.3 %, an increase registered mainly in the cities among people with higher education and among young people.

19. There are no signs to indicate that the consistent trend towards religious pluralism may be reversed over the coming years. On the contrary, everything leads us to believe that the process will intensify. All indications are that Latin America will, in the future, present an even more colourful spectrum of reli-

gious plurality than it does today. Religious pluralism is one of the distinct features of societies in many parts of the contemporary world.

20. Of course, the reasons for this mobility and diversity are multiple and they are to be found both within the "traditional" churches and in the wider context. I don't wish to go into an analysis of this complex picture at the moment. Let me simply observe that to some extent the reality of increasing religious pluralism runs parallel to similar trends, like a mirror in which are reflected a postmodern fragmentation of society on one side, and the "religious marketplace" of a globalized economy on the other.

21. No wonder that a hostile competitiveness has arisen in the religious field, often in aggressive forms of mission and evangelism. Among evangelical churches there is often a strong anti-Catholic sentiment and discourse. Words like "idolatry", "syncretism", "witchcraft" are used without hesitation, when referring to other churches or religious expressions. This "religious climate" is felt and develops ever more intensively, to various degrees, within some of the more "traditional" or "historic churches". In this context we may recall the decision of the Brazilian Methodist Church to withdraw from CONIC, ironically taken just a few days before the Assembly of the World Methodist Council, meeting in Seoul, expressed its support for the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

22. Is it our fate to be in all-against-all religious competition? There cannot be the least doubt that our pre-eminent challenge consists in strengthening and finding new ways for ecumenical dialogue and cooperation among the churches, and among different religious expressions, as well. To avoid falling into mutual conflict, if not into new forms of "holy wars" or all-out competition, the only biblical and theologically responsible option is that of ecumenical dialogue and cooperation.

23. We must confront the divergences within Christianity itself. Burning and divisive issues, both doctrinal and ethical, run to some considerable extent internally through many of our churches, resulting in inner tensions, if not in new divisions. In addition, these tensions run through the ecumenical movement and the WCC. A church leader told me once that he could not support ecumenism because Christianity was actually growing by division, and in particular those churches that acknowledged that fact were growing. My answer was that I did not find it pertinent to discuss this matter on the ground of phenomenology, because I could not see in which way this position would be compatible with the biblical witness and calling of the church. He, however, was convinced that he was only taking Christ's great commission seriously (and the "ecumenicals", according to him, were not).

24. Given such a scenario, it is no wonder that our churches can be tempted to place their ecumenical commitment as a lower priority and try to "defend themselves" against the centrifugal forces of fragmentation, entrenching themselves within their own theological or institutional walls. Within our own family we will do a better job, we might think. Many Christians are disappointed that the churches have been unnecessarily cautious when it comes to drawing practical consequences from the positive results achieved by theological dialogues. Or they may discern setbacks in the ecumenical journey and perceive continuing division as a lack of coherence with the abundant declarations about the importance of striving towards unity.

25. We have to delve deeper into the causes of difficulties and dilemmas that we face today in the ecumenical movement. Can we, for example, address ecumenically the issue of hermeneutics, in particular biblical hermeneutics? Divergent interpretations of scripture and of ways to interpret scripture are at the root of many of our tensions and divisions, if not of most of them. We are surrounded by the constant temptation of religious fragmentation on one side, and religious fundamentalisms on the other side. Even those who advocate in favour of common study read and interpret the Bible (and their confessional traditions) from a particular perspective. After the fear of deciding issues like these by majority vote has been removed from the table by the consensus procedures we have adopted, can the WCC become a safe place where we can engage freely and intensely in respectful dialogue about our biblical hermeneutics, always confident that those who express a different interpretation of the Bible do aim, just as we all do, to be faithful to God's Word? Are we ready to resist any temptation to reject one another as "unfaithful to scripture" but, on the contrary, to persevere in trustful dialogue? In the ecumenical movement we definitely need to take a long, long breath. And let us then pray that the Holy Spirit will assist us and lead us to truth.

"Hoping against hope"

26. I stated at the beginning that our primary task lies in building among ourselves a fellowship of faith as sisters and brothers in Christ. But this should not and shall not hinder open and honest discussions on the issues at stake. The WCC cannot be pushed into a minimalist agenda but must remain, as we already have reminded ourselves, the privileged instrument of the ecumenical movement. The ecumenical movement must not be understood as based on a lowest common denominator. The ecumenical movement is driven by a much higher and challenging vision.

27. We envisage full communion, and it is painful that we have not been able to advance more discernibly towards sharing at the Lord's Table. Ecumenical dialogue and cooperation is not a strategic wrestling with possibilities that we may freely accept or reject. It is a passion for unity arising because we have heard, and received in our hearts, Jesus' prayer to the Father asking that his disciples may be one, as he and the Father are one (John 17:21). We recognize and confess the divisions among us as a sin against God. But we also confess that the Holy Spirit grants us unity through the gospel and baptism, and we receive this God-given unity in faith. On that basis we commit ourselves to strive for full and visible unity among the churches.

28. Thus, ecumenism is not something optional, but compelling. It belongs to the essence of our faith. We engage with passion in ecumenical relations. It is this passion that brings us here, to a WCC central committee meeting, as well. There are, assuredly, many hindrances and obstacles along the paths of ecumenism. It moves slower than we wish. As I have already mentioned, our churches probably move slower than they could. But, as the apostle Paul says in a different context, writing to the congregation in Corinth that was a local church divided in so many ways, we are "perplexed, but not driven to despair" (2 Cor. 4:8).

29. So, in conclusion, let me come back to accounting for our hope. I have raised the question whether there is an ultimate hope which can stand vis-à-vis the hard realities of life, realities which seem to contradict hope so harshly. A well-known Brazilian saying proclaims: "Hope is the last thing to die." This suggests that hope will survive everything else, no matter how much disenchantment and how many frustrations and expectations do become realities. Hope will survive them all. But then, on second thought, we find an unexpected tone of resignation even in that apparently positive saying. "Hope is the last thing to die." This assumes that hope will die, even if it is "at the last". Is there a hope that will not die?

30. When speaking about the resurrection, the apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians that, if there is no resurrection, as some among them believed, then Christ has not been raised and our faith is in vain (1 Cor. 15:13-14, 17). And he opens our eyes to the magnitude of the hope we have in Christ, to the transcendence of the hope in Christ: "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (v.19). If for this life only... Let us then reverse the perspective. If our hope transcends this life, it will be a decisive gift of God for life everlasting, and for this life as well. Elsewhere, the apostle Paul reminds the Romans of Abraham (and why not add Sarah to the example?). He believed in God's promise that he and Sarah, already advanced in

years, would have a child, and that he would become the father of many nations. By this faith he was justified. His faith was also hope. He hoped "against hope" (Romans 4:18). He compared the many little hopes to the one hope in God. It was ultimately a comparison that was impossible to make. Hope in God transcends all other hopes. Therefore, our prayer may be: "God, in your grace, transform our hope." Transform our feeble hopes into that hope which comes from Christ's resurrection and therefore transforms the whole world. Is this not the hope that will bring new life into the ecumenical movement? Let us hope "against hope".

Report of the General Secretary

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia

Introduction

1. I wish to add my word of welcome to you all as we begin this first full meeting of the Central Committee since your election or re-election at the WCC's 9th Assembly last February. In preparing my first report to the central committee I was aware of the advice of the last central committee, which was also echoed by the Porto Alegre Assembly, that the reports of the general secretary (and the moderator, as well) be kept brief to allow more time for response and discussion by the members. I may not have kept my report to the optimal length, but it is shorter than usual. It is in three parts. The first is a brief reflection on the situation in the Middle East, which is the most pressing global issue today, and the challenge of a comprehensive and better coordinated ecumenical response in seeking lasting peace in that volatile region. This section concludes with a specific recommendation for consideration by the central committee. The second part addresses the issue of migration that remains critical to the calling of the ecumenical movement. I shall look beyond the socio-political dimensions of migration and consider migration in relation to new ecclesial realities. And the third part of this report consists of a brief reflection on how our planning work following the assembly intentionally has incorporated one dimension of the ongoing process on ecumenism in the 21st century. This shows that the recommended interactive and integrative approach is not limited to the Council's programmes, but includes the strengthening of the relationships within the fellowship.

Middle East

2. Within 48 hours of the bombing of Lebanon we issued a statement in which we reiterated that the conflicts in the Middle East cannot be resolved through a military victory. Many of our member churches and ecumenical organizations joined in the call for a cease-fire. Church-related organizations at the Ecumenical Centre worked together towards a joint approach which led to our delegation's visit to Beirut and Jerusalem. Now as we meet in this central committee there is a UN-negotiated cease-fire in place and there are plans to increase and strengthen peace-keeping forces on the Israeli-Lebanese border. But it will take a great deal more to achieve a durable peace in the Middle East.

It is out of this conviction that I have decided to open my report by further addressing events in this region.

3. Events in the Middle East pose the greatest of challenges to the international community. They have engaged the ecumenical community for many years. Once again, new violence in Lebanon and northern Israel, and on-going violence associated with the occupations of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem by Israel, and also of Iraq by forces under US command, have wreaked destruction and suffering on an immense scale.

4. The region and the world are at a crossroads. What is the future of Iraq? Will it fragment into Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish enclaves? How are events in Iraq influencing the rest of the region? Will Iran renounce its nuclear weapons ambitions, or will the international community's inability to resolve such problems move the Middle East down the path of nuclear proliferation? How will Israel –with its nuclear arsenal – and the international community answer the same question? What are the prospects for the new Palestinian leadership? Will it have a chance to exercise its democratic mandate, a chance to prove itself and a chance to engage in equitable negotiations with Israel? Will Israelis find a way to engage in equitable negotiations with the Palestinians? What are the real prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine, given the apparent dedication of the present US administration to imposing hegemony in the Middle East?

5. The most important issue in relation to a lasting and durable peace in the Middle East is when and how the international community will end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands, in compliance with international law and UN resolutions. Ending the occupation will allow different forces to emerge and give a new face to the Middle East. A way must be found to allow people of goodwill in Israel to begin to rebuild relations with neighbours — not only on the basis of law but also through negotiated solutions to mutual problems, and around mutually beneficial relations in the fields of commerce, culture and environment. Will moderate Muslims increasingly find themselves in a position to challenge the status quo of their societies? Will the Christian communities of the Middle East be able to sustain their historic and vital presence in the region, or will Christians continue to emigrate?

6. One thing is apparent. A continuation of illegal occupation and related violence will mean a continuation of current trends, according to which the international rule of law becomes weaker and weaker and double standards prevail: trends in which the use of force becomes an international norm and the position of extremists is strengthened in the region and around the world.

7. The WCC with its rich experience and background in inter-religious dialogue can make a major contribution to the Israel-Palestine peace process by working to break down the barriers and build bridges of peace between the two peoples and multiple religious communities caught up in the suffering of this conflict. Given the levels of unresolved grievance and distrust, can this be done? Is the WCC in a position to invest time and energy in what could be a lengthy and heart-breaking process? As a fellowship of Christian churches we cannot escape the challenge. I strongly believe that, together, we are capable of reaching out and building new relationships beyond our current and various customs and comfort zones, with and among Israelis, Palestinians and their neighbours.

8. If we step back from the political and strategic discourse that characterizes much of the discussion of the Middle East, we see a situation which is fundamentally wrong. The ethical dimension must be an integral part of the equation in the search for durable peace in the Middle East. It is not right for a people, the Palestinians, to experience perpetual humiliation. It is not right that hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees have lived in refugee camps for almost 60 years. It is not right that sanctions are imposed on the West Bank and Gaza as punishment for a democratic election, and that already impoverished people, especially in Gaza, are deprived of water, fuel and electricity. Nor is it right for the people of Israel to live in perpetual fear of their neighbours so that they are impelled to depend upon their military might and their powerful allies. It is not right that people in Israel huddled in shelters for a month, and people in Lebanon abandoned their homes, while rockets, artillery shells and attack aircraft screamed through the air and the UN Security Council deliberated. The world has a responsibility both to Palestine and to Israel. They deserve more from the international community than they have received thus far, especially in the fair and impartial application of international law. We need to look beyond the current headlines to the underlying moral issues in the region. It is not enough to condemn Hezbollah's military actions without going deeper into the history of Lebanon's relationship with Israel and other countries in the region. It is not enough to condemn Israel's invasion of Lebanon without also grappling with the issue of Israel's fundamental insecurity. It is not enough to criticize strategies adopted by governments without taking into account the real threats posed by groups of armed settlers and militias whose members ignore the counsels and entreaties of their own political authorities. And it is not enough to reject resistance by non-state actors without acknowledging the sincere yearning for justice that has won them support.

9. The issue of peace in the Middle East is not just a regional issue. It is a global issue. What happens in the Middle East affects countries throughout the world.

And what happens in global capitals affects the Middle East – perhaps more than any other region.

10. I believe that the ecumenical movement has an important role to play in the search for just peace in the Middle East. I believe that if we mobilize our collective efforts, we can make a contribution – just as we made a contribution to South Africa's struggle against apartheid. You will see in our proposed programme plans that we are suggesting that the Middle East, in all of its complexity, be a high priority in the WCC's future programmatic work.

What does this mean in practice?

11. At a recent meeting called by ACT International, there was a passionate plea from churches and ecumenical partners in the region to do more than issue statements. Moreover, they emphasized that while humanitarian assistance is important to address immediate and urgent needs, it is not enough. There was a strong call for a comprehensive ecumenical advocacy initiative, and the WCC was asked to convene a meeting of partners engaged in advocacy on the Middle East to develop a coordinated strategy involving churches, ecumenical organizations and specialized ministries. Building on our experiences with the Sudan Ecumenical Forum, I propose the establishment of a Palestine/Israel Ecumenical Forum that will provide a space for coordination of advocacy initiatives. The capacity of the WCC secretariat is limited, but we can provide a space where the whole ecumenical movement can mobilize to put our collective energies and resources together to contribute to a lasting peace in the Middle East.

12. I also suggest that our advocacy be based squarely on our moral and theological principles and on thoughtful analysis of the roots of the conflict. Alternatives need to be developed in response to difficult aspects of the political impasse. Dialogue must be an integral part of our new initiatives. In previous public statements, the central committee has suggested a way forward on the issues of Jerusalem, the occupation, the settlements, the dividing wall and other related matters. But all of us, including the churches we represent, need to do more to translate those recommendations into actions that influence the political process. We need further analysis and deeper engagement on complex issues – such as the "right of return", Israel's legitimate security concerns and its full recognition within mutually agreeable borders – topics which have impeded previous peace processes. For some of us, this isn't an easy task when we see the imbalance of power in the region. But unless Israel and its neigh-

bours are made secure and mutually recognize one another, there can be no durable peace with justice in the region.

13. We also need to consider concrete actions we can take to support churches, ecumenical partners and people in the region. The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) has been an important expression of solidarity by the ecumenical family. But there is more that we could be doing to redress the international embargo of funds to the Palestinian Authority which leads to increasing unemployment and malnutrition among Palestinians. And we must remember that steps towards peace with justice and security in the region may serve as steps to decrease the emigration of Christians from the region.

14. I hope that you will join this call to make the Middle East a priority, not just in our future programmatic work, but to make it central to our collective endeavours in the ecumenical movement until there is peace in the region and there are sustainable communities where all may experience life in dignity.

Migration – New ecclesial realities

Practising hospitality in an era of new forms of migration

15. Let me focus now on an issue which is one of the main features of the changing global context, with decisive consequences for the ecumenical movement locally and globally. I speak of migration, the steadily increasing movements of people around the globe.

16. More people throughout the world are being forced to leave their homes because of wars, human rights violations, dire poverty or environmental destruction. We have seen in recent months the massive displacement of hundreds of thousands of Lebanese as a consequence of Israel's military actions. While several hundred thousand Lebanese were able to leave their country for Syria, Cyprus and other countries, over half a million Lebanese have been displaced from their homes but remained within the country. These internally displaced people are often more vulnerable to violence and face more difficulties in accessing humanitarian assistance than those who were able to make it across an international border. While television screens were filled with pictures of some foreigners being evacuated from Lebanon, there were many other foreigners in Lebanon whose governments were unable to support their evacuation. Tens of thousands of Asian domestic workers, for example, were forced to remain in the country. The situation in Lebanon illustrates some of the complexities of migration today.

17. From rural to urban areas, from poor to emerging economies in the South, from countries of the South to countries of the North – migration has become a trend impacting most societies worldwide. The number of international migrants has increased to more than 175 million in 2005, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Today, one in fifty people on earth are living outside their home countries, while an estimated 25 million have been forcibly displaced within their own countries. At the same time that globalization is leading to freer movement of capital, goods and services, walls are going up to limit the movement of people across borders. As the "human side" of globalization, the phenomenon of migration means that virtually all societies are multicultural and multireligious.

18. It was interesting to us that even as we in the WCC were planning our work for the coming years, the United Nations issued a report on international migration and development (June 2006) that explored how migration is helping countries expand their economies, meet shortages of workers and lift themselves from poverty. According to the report, migration is no longer a one-way ticket to geographic and cultural isolation. Today, immigrants are able to contribute not only to their new countries, as they have always done, but can more easily help their countries of origin as well. The vast flows of remittances – which last year exceeded $230 billion and now dwarf international aid – are only the most tangible expression of this. In addition, immigrants are using their skills and savings to help their home countries grow, even when they remain abroad. At the same time, the UN report acknowledges that migration has many negative consequences – political, economic and social – and calls on governments to strengthen instruments to protect the rights of migrants.

19. Migration is a global issue, affecting societies around the world. Migration from Pacific countries is changing the nature of island societies and local economies. South Africa deported more than 50,000 illegal Zimbabwean immigrants in the first six months of this year as floods of people fled economic collapse in their country. Much of the domestic policy debate in the United States this year focused on immigration reform. Migrants from North Africa set out in small boats for European shores in record numbers, provoking political crises for countries such as Malta and Spain. The increasing emigration of Christians from the Middle East has long been a concern to churches in the region. Periodic crackdowns in Thailand lead to the deportation of tens of thousands of Burmese migrants who have come to Thailand because they cannot survive at home.

20. The last central committee meeting before the Porto Alegre assembly addressed these realities through a public issue statement on "Practising hos-

pitality in an era of new forms of migration". This document summarizes well the impact of globalization and the post-11 September 2001 concerns for security in regard to the movement of people. The document points to both negative and positive consequences for sending and receiving countries. While remittances have far and away surpassed development aid, Africa already has lost one-third of its educated and skilled labour. "Brain drain" has severe consequences for countries like Ghana that lost to migration 60% of its graduating doctors in the 1980s. Today we can ask: how many of the skilled professionals who fled Lebanon in July and August of this year will return to help re-build their country? Receiving countries benefit from the skills and contributions of immigrants. Nevertheless, some politicians blame immigrants for unemployment, crime and other problems of their economies, thus fuelling racism and xenophobia in their societies, often with severe consequences for migrants who are subject to harassment and even murder.

21. Addressing the emerging trends of migration, our WCC statement draws attention to the trafficking of women and children. It says, "600,000 to 800,000 human beings are trafficked every year with annual profits of US$8-10 billion." In many cases the marginalization and exploitation especially of trafficked women and children, but also of adult men, amount to new forms of slavery. Because of their "illegal" status, they are left without any protection and support.

22. The document highlights the devastating impact of military interventions and war, but also emphasizes that governmental concerns with security and migration have led to unacceptable forms of detention, imprisonment and forced deportation of refugees and asylum seekers in a number of countries. I myself have witnessed the inhuman situation in a detention camp in Australia that I suspect provides a parallel with prison conditions in Guantanamo Bay. The statement concludes with very clear and practical recommendations to the churches on how to offer hospitality to those who arrive in their countries, to combat stigma and discrimination in their societies and to challenge government policies.

New ecclesial realities

23. Last year's central committee statement provides a solid basis to engage with the consequences of migration in our societies. It is a real public issue statement. Migration, however, also has a very deep impact on the churches themselves with important challenges to their ecumenical relationships both locally and globally. And it is for this reason that I have decided to make it the central theme of my report.

24. Intra-national or international migration flows have an impact on the churches from which migrants leave as well as on the churches in their host countries. This is most obviously manifest in the increasing number of new diaspora churches in all countries and regions of the world. The recent multiplication of Orthodox churches all over the world is worth mentioning particularly, as is the remarkable presence in Northern countries of many churches of African origin. Diaspora experience modifies both the "host" and the "guest" churches, and their customary theological or ecclesiological approaches. This is particularly visible in large cities, where migrant churches provide a haven and home for the most vulnerable, offering material support, cultural space, an affirmation of identity and the opportunity for religious expression. In many countries, the growth of such churches is significantly changing the religious and ecumenical scene.

25. Geneva is a good example. For centuries, this city has attracted substantial numbers of foreigners – refugees, business people, employees of international organizations. But in recent decades the figures have drastically increased. According to government statistics the number of people in Geneva of African origin and from Eastern Europe has doubled between 1989 and 2002. Those from Asia and Latin America have increased about 50%. More than 50% of residents in the city of Geneva now come from abroad.

26. The official figures, however, cover only those people who have been officially registered. They do not take into account the many persons without legal status – immigrants looking for a job, asylum seekers and others. This great diversity of people is also mirrored in church life. There are more than sixty Protestant communities of different origin in Geneva. While for many language, culture or ethnic background is the common denominator, others bring together people from different countries. A number of them are bilingual and provide simultaneous French-English interpretation. Some worship in the churches and community centres of the Protestant Church of Geneva, but the majority of them have found their own spaces – sometimes just a garage or a room in a basement. At the same time, other churches of Roman Catholic and Orthodox tradition have come into existence as have new religious communities of Muslim, Jewish and other faiths. It is interesting to note that most members of conservative evangelical and Pentecostal churches in Geneva are foreigners.

27. While migrant churches are being established throughout the world, there are many cases where churches in host countries have opened their doors to migrants and have been transformed in the process. Almost all clergy ordained in the Methodist Church of Aotearoa/New Zealand, for example, are Pacific

Islanders. The more conservative social theologies of Pacific Christians are changing the policies and practices of churches in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Waldensian Church in Italy now has many more African members than Italian ones as a result of a deliberate decision by the church to welcome immigrants and to be transformed in the process. St Andrew's Church in Cairo has similarly been profoundly changed by the active participation of Sudanese Christians in its church life. For many US mainline churches, growth in church membership is happening primarily through increasing Hispanic and Asian participation.

28. There are varying degrees of integration of migrants into the life of host churches. In some cases, churches arrange parallel services for migrants so that they may worship in their own languages. Thus, some congregations in the US will have several worship services on Sunday: in English, Spanish, Korean and Kiswahili, for example. In some cases, migrants establish mission churches, reaching out to English-speaking communities.

29. Of course, migration is bound to change local ecumenism and its organizational expressions. The same is true for the national level. It has been quite some time since the Nigerian-founded Church of the Lord (Aladura) joined the British Council of Churches, today's Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. But there are now developments where, in Switzerland for instance, churches of people of African origin have formed their own umbrella organization (Conference of the African Churches in Switzerland) that is now looking for membership in the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches. The Conference of European Churches has received similar requests from Korean churches and churches of African immigrants. They all say: "We are no longer foreigners. We live together with you in Europe, in this country, in this city. We see ourselves as integral to the one Church, and we wish to become a more visible expression of the Church of Christ in this place."

30. There are encouraging examples from various cities and countries of how the process of integration and ecumenical relationships between different churches may be fostered. I am sure that many of you representing churches from around the globe are in a position to share positive examples showing where the Holy Spirit wants to lead us with these new developments. But we also know that in the process of mutual encounter and growing together, old wounds of history, racism and cultural differences must be addressed. Historically, colonialism accompanied European migration into all regions of the world. People were driven from their lands, their livelihoods were undermined, and many were killed. Colonial conquest and the slave trade deeply changed the ethnic composition of this world in a violent and radical way, and

this has left its mark even on the churches. To this day, the consequences of slavery and racism impact on relationships between churches; for instance, in the USA this history necessarily has been addressed in the process of uniting churches. The impact of migration today confronts churches with racism and xenophobia in new but similarly violent forms.

31. Churches which seek to open themselves to people of different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds often find the process to be more difficult than anticipated. Migrants bring with them different theological traditions, different liturgies and different music that can enrich churches – but also may divide them. Philip Jenkins argues, in *The Next Christendom*, that Christian migrants from the South tend to be more socially conservative and more evangelical than the mainline churches in the North. They often gravitate towards evangelical and Pentecostal churches in the North, thus strengthening the more conservative evangelical churches and, at least indirectly, weakening certain ecumenical initiatives.

32. Churches, like the societies of which they are a part, are grappling with the questions of assimilation versus integration. It is easier for a church to welcome migrants as long as they adapt to the traditions and policies established by the host church. This is assimilation. Integration, on the other hand, implies a willingness to accept the contributions of migrants to change the church and to create something new. This is more difficult for many to accept. It has been argued that one of the reasons migrants establish their own churches is because they don't feel that the established churches are ready to change to accommodate their needs.

The church of the stranger

33. Throughout the Bible and in the early church, people were called by God to love and offered hospitality to strangers and exiles (Lev. 19:33-34; Rom. 15:7). The Bible contains many stories of people on the move, from Abram/Abraham and Sarah/Sarai to the Holy Family. Christ's call to welcome the stranger (Matt. 25:31-45) is central to the gospel message. Welcoming the stranger is not optional for Christians. Nor is it conditional. Christ didn't call for Christians to welcome those strangers whose papers are in order or who speak our language. Given the realities of migration today, welcoming strangers is not just about "being nice" to those who arrive on one's doorstep. In today's world, welcoming strangers is a justice issue, and often a political statement.

34. It would be wrong to deny that welcoming strangers often goes hand in hand with a deep challenge to one's own tradition and identity as a Christian and as a church. Unfortunately, it is not automatic that the experience of dif-

ference translates into the embrace of diversity and the sharing of different gifts. It requires a conscious choice to build relationships of trust and to be ready to change in the common encounter. Very often, difference is further deepened by lines drawn between differing communities that might even justify racist exclusion and oppression. The community that is called to share the bread and the wine with each other, and to follow Jesus in his ministry of healing and reconciliation, must not aggravate divisions; rather, it should become a bridge-builder. It ought to provide space for those who are different from one another to experience that they all belong to one humanity meant by God to share life on this planet.

35. Over the centuries, Christian communities were ready to help people on the move. This was vital in times of persecution (1 Peter 4:9). Widows and deaconesses practised hospitality (1 Timothy 5:10) and served strangers even in other countries. St Verena, a nurse from Egypt, went to Switzerland in the 3rd century. There were St Anysia in Thessaloniki (3rd century), Olympias in Constantinople (4th century), St Melany from Rome (5th century), Juliette the Merciful in Russia (16th century). At the edge of the city of Caesarea in Cappadocia, St Basil began to construct a group of buildings destined to receive travellers and sick persons. In many other places similar houses were established in a ministry known as *xenodochia*.

36. Many churches remember that their ancestors had to leave their villages, cities and countries for the sake of their faith; they were expelled, or fled from war and genocide. In many parts of the world, there are churches that have existed and continue to exist as churches of refugees and migrants. There are also others who remember how their church received and welcomed these refugees into their midst. The 19th-century abolitionist movement in the US and Canada gave refuge to slaves on their way into freedom. Churches in Europe joined in helping people to escape from Nazi dictatorship and the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Today, churches in South America are working together to move to safety Colombians whose lives are in danger.

The challenge to our fellowship

37. Churches, from the very beginning of their existence, have built diaconal services for refugees and migrants. But they have always understood that the real challenge goes deeper and is indeed about sharing in solidarity the common life in Christ. Unavoidably, the situation of migrants puts the question to each of us: Who is my neighbour? Diaconia in this existential context reveals the deeper meaning of the koinonia, the fellowship in Christ.

38. The fifteenth-century Orthodox icon of the Holy Trinity by Andrei Rubliev identifies the divine communion between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit with the communion of the three strangers who were received and fed by Abraham in the spirit of genuine hospitality (Genesis 18; Hebrews 13:2). As was expressed in the July 2004 Faith and Order Commission meeting, "through the practice of true hospitality, which transcends somehow the distinction between 'host' and 'guest', a mutual transformation takes place."

39. Let me conclude my reflections by posing a number of questions:

Does such true hospitality in the shared household of God provide us with an interim goal at the present stage of ecumenism? Can there be among us genuine hospitality, which helps to overcome the wounds of the past, to discover each other in new ways and to build the relationships and the community that will help us, finally, to discover and live out our oneness in Christ? Are we willing to take the necessary risks? Practising true hospitality involves recognizing our own vulnerability and being open to transformation. "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured" (Heb. 13:1-3). The process of welcoming strangers also leads us to look at our own societies in new ways and to see the racism and xenophobia that may not otherwise be apparent to us. Standing with migrants is politically unpopular in most regions of the world. The risks are very real, yet so is our calling.

40. Migration is a complex phenomenon which affects our societies, our churches and our ecumenical movement. This issue merits further reflection and discussion, and you will see in our programme plans that we are calling for public hearings in different regions next year and a major global consultation on "Migration and the changing ecclesial landscape" in 2008. These reflections are meant to feed into the process on ecumenism in the 21st century, which will continue to be high on our agenda until the next assembly in 2013.

Post-Assembly planning process

41. I will not now comment in detail on the WCC Programme Plans 2007-2013 which constitute one of the main subjects on the agenda of this central committee meeting. Two plenary sessions will give us ample time for introducing the planning process, presenting the content of the proposals and preparing

the central committee to take the necessary policy decisions to allow the Council to move from the planning mode to the stage of implementation.

42. I simply wish to highlight here that, in the aftermath of the assembly, most of our efforts have been centred around the importance of ecumenical experiences and partnerships, thus – directly or indirectly – affirming the centrality in our thinking of the process on ecumenism in the 21st century.

New ways of working with ecumenical partners

43. The assembly articulated an urgent call for an integrated and interactive approach to programmes and relationships in the Council's work, and affirmed the Council's leadership role in the process of engaging the wider ecumenical movement in constructive collaboration or "reconfiguration". Our partners in this process include WCC member churches, Christian World Communions (CWCs), Regional Ecumenical Organizations (REOs), National Councils of Churches (NCCs), world mission bodies, specialized ministries, as well as Christian churches not currently in the membership of the WCC.

44. Mindful of this call, we shared our draft planning documents with a consultation that included representatives of member churches, representatives of CWCs, REOs, ecumenical youth organizations, and specialized ministries. Though informally, we have shared our planning documents with the European ecumenical agencies (APRODEV). We received input from the US Conference for the WCC. At the WCC Round Table we discussed these plans extensively with our ecumenical partners. Given our time constraints, we did our best to consult as broadly as possible. I believe that our planning journey during the last few months has demonstrated our commitment to the imperative of constructive ecumenical cooperation in responding to the challenges of the 21st century.

45. I hope that, more tangibly, our commitment to new ways of working was manifest in the manner we planned and monitored the visit to Lebanon and Israel/Palestine, and the way we welcomed back the ecumenical delegation. This initiative was jointly coordinated by the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the Conference of European Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The composition of the three-person delegation deliberately included a Roman Catholic, Archbishop Mgr Bernard Nicolas Aubertin. The others were the Rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont, leader of the delegation and President of CEC, and Ms Marilia Schüller, a member of the WCC's executive staff. We made it clear that the delegation was entrusted with the mission of expressing global ecumenical solidarity with churches and people affected by the conflict in the Middle East, and that the delegation had

returned with the task of transmitting the hopes and expectations of the churches in Lebanon, Palestine and Israel to the entire ecumenical family.

Cooperation with CWCs

46. With the steering committee of the Conference of the general secretaries of CWCs, we have considered the recommendation of the assembly policy reference committee with regard to the creation of "a joint consultative commission to discuss and recommend ways to further strengthen the participation of Christian World Communions in the WCC". The steering committee agreed that both the agenda and the terms of reference of this joint instrument are already spelled out in the policy reference committee report, and that the group itself could assume the coordinating role.

47. Later during this meeting, a concrete proposal will be processed through the nominations committee and presented for action in order to secure the continuation of this common endeavour, keeping in mind that one of the important items on the agenda of the joint commission will be, to quote the assembly policy reference committee report, to explore "new ways of relating CWCs to the WCC, including new possibilities related to future WCC assemblies, expanded space in the structure of WCC assemblies for confessional meetings, and the vision ultimately of a broadly inclusive ecumenical assembly".

48. The latter is an issue that we should particularly keep in mind while receiving, during one of our subsequent sessions at this meeting, the assembly evaluation report and initiating discussion on the steps leading towards the next assembly.

Clarifying institutional roles

49. The CEC central committee meeting earlier this year offered an appropriate occasion for continuing the discussion on policy matters raised at Porto Alegre. The Venerable Colin Williams, general secretary of CEC, dedicated a considerable section of his report to the CEC-WCC relationship and the process on ecumenism in the 21st century, quoting a substantial collection of key assembly texts, mostly from the Policy Reference Committee report. Two members of the WCC staff participated in the meeting and spoke to the process on ecumenism in the 21st century, and to the programmatic cooperation between the two organizations.

50. The insights gained from this experience strongly affirm the urgent need for defining a meaningful and efficient distribution of tasks and roles within the ecumenical family, the aim being to achieve greater ecumenical coherence

and to strengthen the impact of ecumenical action. Indeed, this is a matter I have already undertaken, and in due course I would like to discuss our findings more extensively with the broader constituency, including the REOs.

Maturation of a joint ecumenical project

51. A frank dialogue was initiated with the continuation committee of the Global Christian Forum. We have shared openly our conceptual and ecumenical, organizational and financial prospects and difficulties. We considered together how the Global Christian Forum could be seen as a contribution to the emerging shape of ecumenism. Indeed, the Global Christian Forum is entering a decisive stage given that, in November 2007, it is intended to bring together representatives of all the main Christian traditions in the world and their global organizations at a high level of leadership. The task ahead involves taking stock of the new experiences and the new partnerships that are being created through the journey towards this global event, and undertaking a careful assessment of the whole process and its results.

New ecclesial and ecumenical challenges

52. Without neglecting the weight of all the above-mentioned institutional ecumenical developments, one should admit that the most important and powerful ecumenical challenges come today from within the life and witness of the churches, and from their attitude towards the ecumenical movement and ecumenical organizations. The recent withdrawal or threatened withdrawal of churches from ecumenical organizations raises new questions with regard to inter-ecclesial relationships and our basic assumptions about the "one ecumenical movement". I refer most specifically to the situation in Brazil, where the Methodist Church withdrew from CONIC, the national council of churches, only a few months after our assembly in Porto Alegre. The reason given had to do with Roman Catholic participation in CONIC. This underscores the continual need to work together to increase our efforts in strengthening ecumenism in the 21st century.

53. The decision of the Methodist Church in Brazil and some other similar moves will have to be studied carefully by all of us, since they may affect not only ecumenism at the national level but also relationships at the global level. Indeed, the potential implications of such developments on local churches, the CWCs, the WCC and other ecumenical organizations at all levels should be of great concern as we develop a process for reconfiguring the ecumenical movement.

54. It is encouraging, as the moderator has indicated in his report, that during this meeting of the central committee you will be invited to take a policy decision and accept into the fellowship of the WCC another Brazilian church, the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil.

Conclusion

55. I began this report with words of welcome, and I have alluded to the ministry of hospitality to which Scripture invites the people of God. As you undertake your responsibilities at this first full meeting of the new central committee, I commend to you these words of the apostle Paul: "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom 15:7).

56. We call for peace in the Middle East, justice for migrants, unity among the world's Christians. These are grand concepts and daunting challenges. But the accomplishment of peace, justice, unity and common mission, on however large a scale, begins for us in the building of friendships. This is especially important during the early sessions of a newly-elected central committee.

57. "I have called you friends," Jesus told his followers (John 15:15), prior to his prayer that we may all be one (17:21). Friendship is at the heart of all we do. In the end, our talk of a fellowship of churches, integrated models of working, interactive programmes and new patterns of ecumenism, depend on the formation of friendships that will abide. "I have called you friends," Jesus tells his followers, and Paul exhorts us to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us.

58. It is true that there remain some honest differences among the churches represented here. But we have a friend in common. So let us welcome one another, build relationships of trust and love, and continue our journey together to the glory of the Triune God.

Statements on public issues

Statement on plight of children in conflicts with focus on Northern Uganda

1. This issue emerged towards the end of the Porto Alegre assembly as being of particular concern.

2. Christians have a special concern for children caught in desperate and dehumanizing situations. They see in all abuse of children a direct denial of the biblical teaching that all persons are "made in the image of God" and, as such, are of infinite worth and value. They see in the use of children as instruments of war a virulent denial of the gospel itself, a direct attack upon Jesus, his person and his message.

3. The gospel reminds us that children are hopeful signs of God's unconditional love and promise to humankind. In a world of diversity and disparity, children are a unifying force bringing people together. Any attack on children and their childhood must be denounced as being intolerable and unacceptable.

4. In 1979, the International Year of the Child, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches in a Christmas message called on the Christian community and churches "to provide the possibilities for children to live in trust in a communion of open and fulfilling relationships, in trustworthiness, in a creative use and development of their potentialities for the good of all. Like their Lord, they must be enabled to grow and become strong in wisdom and grace, in self-giving love". It is our collective responsibility as a human family to ensure that children grow up in a loving and caring environment where their needs are met and rights guaranteed.

5. Christians therefore see in the involvement of children in war an offence not only against the children involved, but against God. They see in the use of children as tools of war a denial of God's wish that all human beings should live into a future of hope and fulfillment. Jesus asked indignantly: "Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11-12). What would Jesus say to those who give to children not a snake or a scorpion, but something far worse: weapons and the skill to use them, the experience of being only a tool, a body to be exploited by those who are older and more powerful, physical and emotional scars to last a lifetime?

6. Regrettably, the plight of the children – their woes and sufferings – continues to be immense and endless in situations of wars and violence from Sierra Leone to Liberia, and from Sudan to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Their dreams are shattered by terror, their innocence and tender years of growing-up snatched by warlords and unscrupulous governments. For Jesus it was the peacemakers who would be called "children of God" (Matt. 5:9); how bitter it is to see children made into warriors! For Christians this is an offence not only against all human decency but against God and against their faith, founded by Christ who came as the Prince of Peace.

7. Presently, millions of children around the world, but more particularly in Africa, are caught in conflicts in which they are not bystanders but targets. In these armed conflicts, mostly intra-state, children become victims and are killed as part of the crimes committed against humanity. They become victims of sexual violence and human trafficking, are shamed, traumatized and exploited; some are exposed to hunger and disease. Thousands are forcefully abducted as child soldiers and combatants, in wars that are not only senseless and brutal but also unwarranted and illegal.

8. In case they resist, child soldiers are often administered drugs that inhibit their guilt and fear and incite them to commit brutalities. Propaganda, revenge and fear of being left alone also influence children to stay in the army "voluntarily". Those who survive are often physically injured, sometimes maimed and psychologically scarred, losing several years of schooling and socialization. At the end of a conflict, reintegration of demobilized ex-child soldiers is a difficult and complex process because the population in most cases does not trust them. Often, children who manage to escape are treated as social outcasts and the community seeks to punish them for the crimes they were forced to commit, while they were forcibly abducted and used by rebel groups.

9. One such war of unregulated terror and violence is being waged by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) against the government of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda since 1986, and a UN representative at Porto Alegre drew the attention of Assembly members to the plight of children caught up in the war. During the last twenty years thousands of young children have been kidnapped, tortured, raped, virtually enslaved and sometimes killed by the LRA. The LRA has perpetuated brutal attacks against homes and schools in Northern Uganda and has targeted children for use as soldiers in its attempt to overthrow the Ugandan government. These children have been forced to take part in combat, carry heavy loads, act as personal servants to the rebels and in the case of girls have been made to serve as wives to rebel commanders.

10. In recent times around two million people, 80% of them children and women, have been herded like animals in some twenty concentration camps run by the Ugandan government. They live in appalling conditions without proper facilities of hygiene and sanitation. Many more have been physically abused, detained and raped by the Uganda People's Defence Forces and the LRA.

11. The war has not only affected Uganda but also Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since the mid 1990s, the LRA has also operated from bases in Southern Sudan. The government of Sudan provided the LRA sanctuary on its territory along the border, as well as military aid and food supplies, allegedly in retaliation for Ugandan government support for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). In December 2003, President Museveni invited the international criminal court to investigate the LRA. Late last year the court, after preliminary investigations, issued warrants for the arrest of the top five LRA leaders including Joseph Kony. In the year 2005, the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A signed a peace agreement. The former SPLM/A rebel group is now the ruling political party in Southern Sudan's government.

12. The churches of Uganda have remained in constant support of a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the region. A major initiative took place in 1998 with the founding of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI). This was supported by the Ugandan Joint Christian Council (UJCC). The grouping of Acholi leaders from Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim backgrounds called for an immediate end to violence. The government of Uganda at the time was not inclined to dialogue with the rebels but nevertheless adopted an Amnesty Bill in December 2000. As a result, a number of rebels turned themselves in, diminishing the military power of the LRA. Another peace initiative led by the former Ugandan government minister Betty Bigombe collapsed in 2004, before direct talks could take place between the government of Uganda and the LRA.

13. For many years the conflict in Northern Uganda received little international attention. This changed after the November 2003 visit to Northern Uganda by the UN Under-Secretary-General, Jan Egeland, who called the situation "the world's worst forgotten humanitarian crisis". Following the peace agreement between the government of Sudan and the SPLA/M, the leaders of Southern Sudan publicly announced that the movement will not allow LRA to take refuge in Sudan anymore.

14. In May 2006, Southern Sudan's President Salva Kiir took the initiative to mediate between President Museveni of Uganda and Joseph Kony of LRA. President Museveni made a public statement that if the peace negotiation suc-

ceeded, he would give the LRA leaders amnesty and protect them against International Criminal Court (ICC) persecution. The ICC, however, reminded the Ugandan government of its obligations as a party to the ICC to arrest Kony and others who are subjects of the arrest warrants.

15. Some church leaders are of the opinion that under these circumstances the chances of a permanent cease-fire have diminished because the LRA leadership will not be ready to negotiate under the pressure of indictment. They are of the view that it is important to restore some sense of peace and viability to the community rather than go for punishment which will hinder the efforts to reconcile the parties.

16. Against this background, the World Council of Churches central committee meeting in Geneva between 30 August and 6 September 2006:

- ***Affirms the special concern*** that Christians have for the plight of children caught up in armed conflict;
- ***Expresses concern*** at the threat to international peace and security, impediments to the provision of humanitarian emergency aid and assistance as a result of the ongoing conflict in Northern Uganda, and the activities of the LRA in Southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- ***Condemns the atrocities*** being committed by the LRA and calls on it to cease and desist immediately from all acts of violence, including abductions;
- ***Encourages*** the continuation of the talks between the government of Uganda and the LRA being mediated by the government of Southern Sudan for a lasting and durable peace including the establishment of a mechanism along the lines of a truth and reconciliation commission that supports traditional reconciliation initiatives to help resolve the conflict;
- ***Urges the government of Uganda***, in accordance with its national policies, to ensure the protection of all civilians, including protection of children from abductions; to minimize child casualties; ensure that all children who escape from the LRA receive prompt and adequate access to medical attention and counselling; arrange prompt release of children to their families and/or arrange appropriate alternate care for children that takes into account their special needs; and develop concrete plans for meeting the long-term needs of former child soldiers;
- ***Urges also the churches*** in Uganda and the region and all member churches to mobilize the people to denounce those committing crimes against children with impunity and undertake advocacy with international partners to prevent the abuse of children;

- ***Appeals to the United Nations and the African Union*** to recognize that the LRA poses a threat to international peace and security and endorse a plan that includes the appointment of a UN envoy acceptable to Uganda to support mediation strategy, including preparation of detailed proposals to have the LRA sign up to a cease fire, security guarantees, and more expansive programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into society (DDR);

- ***Calls on the donors***, including non-governmental organizations, to work with the government of Uganda to meet basic humanitarian needs of IDPs in Northern Uganda and to assess when camp populations can be supported and protected to return home. The DDR strategy for the LRA must be linked to increased aid for IDP war victims.

Statement on just trade

1. The WCC has had a long standing interest in the question of just trade. Churches have participated in the sustained work of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), which embarked on a campaign (in 2002) on "Trade for People". EAA's framework of action on trade underlines that: "The biblical standard for economic activity, including the trade of goods and services, is justice, and taking the side of the poor, fair payment, transparent relationships, no exploitation, and respect for life, ensuring the care of widows, children and strangers". It concludes that: "trade therefore must be an instrument of sustainable, participatory and just community and communion."

2. The July 2006 breakdown of the Doha round of trade talks (which were begun in 2001 in Doha) within the World Trade Organization (WTO), was a blow to multilateral relationships in global trade. Multilateral institutions, such as the WTO, were set up to sustain and enhance multilateral relationships and to carry out common actions. But many of these institutions have, in recent times, been undermined and rendered incapable of protecting common goals as the interests of individual nation states dominate such relationships. The WTO, as a multilateral trade institution is supposed to be a forum where sovereign states, big and small, can come together in a democratic way to address trade related problems and seize opportunities to ensure trade is conducted with a view to raising standards of living. From its inception, regrettably, the WTO suffered from the misuse of power by the most influential countries. The collapse of the negotiations for trade after five years of intense talks is the most recent challenge to multilateralism.

3. The breakdown of negotiations signifies that there will be more and more bilateral trade arrangements in the future. Those who will be worst affected by bilateralism will be the weaker developing countries, who will not be in a position to exercise any kind of leverage and can therefore be exploited. A case in point are the trade negotiations between the European Union and the ACP countries (in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) which should lead to Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) – free trade arrangements – between the EU and six ACP regions in 2008. In 2001, when the talks began, there was hope that the new set of rules for international trade would benefit the people of the developing countries – there was hope that smaller nations could participate in the prosperity enjoyed thus far by a few developed nations. After generations of almost exclusively providing primary products and resources to the industrialized world there was hope that developing nations could move out of poverty by participating as equals in trade between nations. These hopes, however, soon faded as the developed industrialized countries began to impose their terms and conditions through the mechanisms of the WTO. The share of least developed countries in respect of world exports steadily declined from 0.7 % in 1985 to 0.4 % in 2005. (UNDP) This is because trade conditions imposed on the poor have weakened the advantages they could have enjoyed with the opening of trade. Governments, not only in the developing world, are pressurized by transnational companies for concessions in taxes, labour regulations and to delay the imposition of environmental standards. Subsidies from governments to some sectors of the developed world also threaten trade relations.

4. To take agriculture as an example: While a major share of the GDP of poor countries is dependent on agriculture the reverse is the case in industrial countries, yet negotiations in agriculture at the WTO are dominated by the minimal offers made by rich countries, coupled with their aggressive demands on Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) and services. The developed countries want to benefit even from agriculture despite the fact that they have a large share in non-agricultural trade. Poor farmers in largely agrarian economies suffer from dumping and other effects of unfair trade rules. Poor countries want a trade deal that helps to eradicate poverty. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, 800 million people experience food shortages, while an additional 42 million suffer from severe malnutrition. While annual global agricultural exports are valued at USD 500 billion, at least 15 million children die every year before reaching the age of five from hunger and hunger related diseases. There is sufficient food to meet the needs of everyone, but it does not reach the poor and hungry since they are unable to afford it due to unfair trade patterns and practices. The current global trading system, with

its imbalances, has failed to deliver on the promise of economic growth and poverty eradication. It has in fact, undermined food security for the poor, thrown millions of peasants and workers out of employment and slowed down industrial development in many poor countries.

5. The WCC central committee, when it met in Potsdam, Germany, in 2001, was concerned about these developments and the worsening economic relations and growing disparities between developed and developing nations. The Potsdam central committee, therefore, called for the elaboration of the concept of just trade as one of the central pillars of the Council's work on economic justice. Consequently, churches all over the world have conducted critical assessments of trade agreements, as well as worked on developing alternate proposals for just trade in consultation with civil society groups and social movements.

6. During the last five years of WTO talks, the developed countries have consistently opposed the proposals put forward by the developing countries. They have preferred "Aid for Trade" or trade related technical assistance to poor countries to alleviate the short-term adjustment costs of opening up their markets and to facilitate trade by addressing the lack of infrastructure and other "supply constraints". Such aid, however, was unfairly conditioned on the acceptance of the Doha round's liberalization agenda. This proposal falls far short of what churches and ecumenical partners have been advocating for in their campaign: **"Trade for People – Not People for Trade"**.

7. It was primarily the positions taken by the United States and the European Union, in pursuance of their respective interests, which finally triggered the collapse of this round of the WTO talks. Each blamed the other for not taking adequate measures to remove support to their own farmers considered by many developing countries as one major cause for confrontation under the current system.

8. The collapse of the talks is a set-back to poor countries that will now have to fend for themselves in bilateral negotiations. While the talks may have collapsed and multilateralism suffers a set-back, the churches recognize that global trade is too important to be put on the back-burner. The churches need to continue to equip and empower each other to address their governments on the issue of justice in global trade as it impacts on the lives of people.

9. Just trade requires the transformation of trade rules negotiated at the WTO, as well as in other regional and bilateral agreements. All trade rules and agreements must be built around the commitment to:

- protect and advance the interests of smaller, weaker and vulnerable states;
- encourage sustainable development and poverty eradication as defined by the people themselves;
- give primacy to peoples' right to food, water, the necessities of life, and protect the small producers to enable them to survive and thrive;
- abide by international norms and standards that guarantee fundamental human rights;
- strengthen respect for creation with ecological standards that safeguard the interests of future generations and the survival of the earth;
- ensure equitable and just distribution of resources for all.

10. Therefore, the central committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, from 30 August to 6 September 2006:

- ***Affirms*** the theological basis for the commitment to uphold and promote just trade: the profound option of our faith for the "least", the poor and the excluded and calls for continuation of theological and biblical reflections on just trade;
- ***Calls on*** the churches to encourage their governments to continue working for a new multilateral trade mechanism, with a new set of multilateral trade rules which are just and democratic;
- ***Encourages*** countries to engage in participatory trade negotiation processes, which will result in just trade that reduces poverty, promotes human rights and protects the environment;
- ***Encourages and supports*** the coordinated campaigns for just trade carried out through the initiatives of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, churches and related organizations;
- ***Calls for*** dialogue and building of alliances for just trade among ecumenical, religious, economic and political actors and between the churches in the North and the South;
- ***Expresses*** the need to strategically link up peasant movements, labour movements, women's and Indigenous Peoples' movements to prepare and design alternate proposals for just trade through the World Social Forum and other avenues;
- ***Promotes*** awareness building of congregations on the impact of trade agreements and policies particularly on the lives of the people in the South through education and ecumenical formation and through study and action.

Statement on churches' compassionate response to HIV and AIDS

Background

1. The AIDS pandemic presents one of the most significant challenges of our times. AIDS causes 8000 deaths every day, has left 13 million children orphaned, and exposes the perilous state of many countries' health care systems. AIDS threatens the very existence of communities, cripples their ability to be sustainable and productive, and shatters relationships due to the accompanying stigma and discrimination. The situation poses a serious challenge to the leadership and capacity of the churches to respond to this ongoing crisis. Since the first appearance of the pandemic, 25 years ago, an estimated 65 million people have been infected with HIV, of whom 25 million have died. In 2005 alone an estimated 4.1 million people became infected with HIV and an estimated 2.8 million people have died of AIDS-related illnesses. Today, the fastest growth in infection and greatest threat is to women and youth.

2. Five years after the 2001 United Nations General Assembly's special session on HIV/AIDS, the evidence available underscores the great diversity among countries and regions in implementing the response envisioned in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. While certain countries have reached some key targets and milestones for 2005 as set out in the declaration, most countries have failed to fulfill their pledges. A great deal of work still needs to be done – promises made must be kept, millions of lives depend on this.

The ecumenical response, 1986 – 1997

3. The ecumenical movement has been steadfast in its commitment to respond to HIV and AIDS and has promoted a holistic approach in addressing the pandemic. As early as 1986 the executive committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) cautioned: "*... churches as institutions have been slow to speak and to act, that many Christians have been quick to judge and condemn many of the people who have fallen prey to the disease; and that through their silence, many churches share responsibility for the fear that has swept our world more quickly than the virus itself*" and called on the churches to respond appropriately to the need for pastoral care, education for prevention and social ministry.

4. Continuing in a similar vein the WCC central committee meeting in September 1996, urged the churches: "*to promote, both in their own lives and in the wider society, a climate of sensitive, factual and open exploration of the ethical issues posed by the pandemic ... in accordance with their emphasis upon personal*

and communal responsibility the churches can promote conditions – personal, cultural, and socio-economic – which support persons in making responsible choices." Speaking about the living conditions of those carrying the virus, the committee said: *"People living with HIV/AIDS generally encounter fear, rejection and discrimination... Because such reactions contradict the values of the gospel, the churches are called to formulate and advocate a clear policy of non-discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS."*

Positive change

5. The churches have since continued in their struggle against HIV and AIDS in all the regions of the world and there have been many positive developments. The year 2000 witnessed the launch of the "Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance" (EAA) of which the WCC is an active participant, which facilitates an active campaign that includes fighting stigma and discrimination, promoting prevention, mobilizing resources, advocating universal access to treatment, and promoting accountability of governments and churches. The Alliance equips and ensures that churches have the much-needed capacity to undertake this advocacy.

6. The "Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa" (EHAIA) launched in 2002 aims at accompanying churches to become "HIV-competent". It is making a critical contribution in bringing about an inspired and rigorous theological understanding of AIDS that includes appropriate training of clergy and laity as well as enhancing the churches, capacity to engage in local action to overcome the challenges that accompany HIV and AIDS. The churches in the Pacific, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and in Eastern Europe have also made significant progress in establishing initiatives and providing practical support on the ground during this period.

7. A WCC-led effort, in association with the African Network of Religious Leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS (ANERELA+), the Global Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (GNP+) and the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), promotes greater and more meaningful participation of people living with HIV and AIDS in the life of the church. The campaign has encouraged and provided guidance to churches to be more inclusive of people living with HIV and AIDS.

8. There are countless examples of the churches' response to the pandemic – in prevention, care, treatment, confronting stigma, and theological reflection. Some church leaders are speaking publicly about their successful initiatives, while identifying and addressing the gaps in their response.

9. For the first time ever, the world possesses the means to reverse the global epidemic. However, success will require complete willingness on the part of all actors engaged in the global response to fulfill their potential, to adopt new ways of working with each other and be committed to sustaining the response over the long period.

The challenge

10. Nearly three decades into the AIDS pandemic and in spite of the progress made in increasing global awareness and commitment to overcome HIV, the epidemic continues to outstrip these efforts and remains a serious threat to humanity.

11. Churches have a unique and critical role to play in stemming the tide and overcoming the pandemic. Health and support systems established and managed by churches and Christian organizations provide some of the most significant grassroots care of people living with or affected by HIV or AIDS. But even more, efforts to overcome stigma and discrimination – which have been fuelled by attitudes within religious communities – are essential to share accurate information about prevention and treatment.

12. The situation calls for churches in collaboration with other organizations and Christians to reflect abundant love in all their responses to HIV and AIDS. These responses have to be tempered by compassion and qualified by competence. The bottom line is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the community. The quality and quantity of the response from the Christian community should reflect the levels of commitment that are demanded of Christians as followers of Jesus Christ.

13. The churches need to provide the leadership to prevent and to overcome HIV and AIDS, and recognize people living with the virus as precious members of the community. Sound policies have to be put in place with tangible actions, where treatment, care and support for all who are affected are easily accessible. Attention should be given to relationships and family life – including the lifesaving responsibility of all to protect themselves through practising abstinence outside of marriage, fidelity in the family and a healthy way of life including rejection of drug abuse.

14. Educational efforts must be supported which promote sexual responsibility and help protect people from non-consensual sex and sexual violence. Additionally, women and girls must be guaranteed access to reproductive health care. The churches should promote life, by providing comprehensive and evidence-based information on preventing transmission of the virus, ensuring

access to voluntary and confidential counselling and testing, and universal access to care and treatment.

Raising the 'voice' of leaders

15. Aware of the value of advocacy, church leaders should use it to influence society to bring about policy changes. Leaders must challenge themselves, their own institutions and society to face the issue in a forthright manner, breaking the silence that fuels fear, judgement, stigma and discrimination. Leaders must support initiatives that will guide people to make responsible choices to protect them from HIV infection, reduce vulnerabilities to infection, and encourage supportive communities where people can receive accurate information and treatment.

16. Religious leaders must begin by examining their own behaviour, attitudes and actions that may have been complicit in the marginalization and stigmatization of people living with HIV and AIDS rather than the full inclusion of people who are living with and affected by the virus. The Bible and the example of Jesus always lead us to stand alongside someone we might prefer to avoid. Jesus said, "There God is present". We are compelled to stand with those who are suffering, to have mercy rather than to marginalize, to empower rather than to stigmatize.

Giving a 'face' to the challenge

17. Churches have promoted and should continue to promote greater and more meaningful involvement and participation of people living with HIV and AIDS, whilst adopting inclusive workplace policies and sustainable methods of working with networks of positive people. Given the fact that this pandemic is driven by poverty and gender issues, it is imperative that women and girls be included in planning and implementing policies and programmes that directly affect them. Efforts must be made to ensure that HIV-positive people are part of a team of resource persons whose task is to empower churches to deal with the issues in a more holistic and inclusive manner. Given the rising rates of infection among youth, young people need to also be involved in crafting messages and programmes to address prevention and support.

18. In a very real sense, we are all living with HIV and AIDS. We separate ourselves from God and God's love if we speak of "them" and "us" when we speak of people living with HIV and AIDS or those who are most vulnerable to infection.

Providing 'hands' to the issue

19. The churches must be the able and willing hands of God, reflecting a compassionate, engaging and competent church. There should also be a commitment by the churches to mainstream responses to HIV and AIDS, to ensure that society is made less vulnerable to the disease and also benefits from new developments made in combating HIV – new developments in prevention, treatment, care and support. Access to anti-retroviral treatment must be promoted for all who need it. The benefits of science and medications should be made available and affordable to all communities, especially those that are marginalized and isolated.

20. As an important part of the learning process, churches should encourage open and inclusive discussions on issues related to sexuality, gender-based violence and intravenous drug use, so that individuals and communities are empowered to be less vulnerable to HIV. The need to promote understanding of the issue from both a theological and ethical context is important and necessary, so that the response is grounded in clear thinking, focused on providing care and support for those infected by HIV and AIDS as well as preventing further spread of the virus.

21. Romans 8:35 states: "Who can separate us from the love of Christ?" Can HIV come between Christ and us? If someone attempts to come between HIV-positive people and God, does he or she come from God? Does the congregation make the person living with HIV feel welcome, loved and part of the same body? If the congregation perpetuates exclusion, avoidance, stigmatization or persecution is it not placing a barrier between God and God's children?

22. The majority of the 40 million people living with HIV have no access to treatment. Faith-based communities have a responsibility to advocate that anti-retroviral treatments as well as treatment for other opportunistic infections be made available and accessible to all.

23. There are billions of people in the world who, though not infected with HIV, continue to remain ill-informed and thus are not equipped to prevent this eminently preventable disease. This makes it obligatory to engage in and work to overcome the viruses of ignorance, silence and fear: neglecting to do so amounts to placing barriers between God and God's children.

The need to act

24. Failure urgently to strengthen the response to AIDS will mean that the world will achieve neither the 2010 target of the Declaration of Commitment nor Millennium Development Goal 6. And without major progress in tackling

AIDS, global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty, hunger and childhood mortality will similarly fall short of agreed targets. Countries in all the regions of the world whose development has already suffered because of AIDS will continue to weaken, with potential threats to social stability and national security. But the tragic reality is that millions continue to die each year.

25. The central committee of the World Council of Churches meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 30 August to 6 September:

- ***Acknowledges*** that while after 25 years of the first appearance of AIDS much progress has been made in terms of global awareness and promises to overcome HIV, the pandemic continues to outstrip these efforts and remains a serious threat to humanity;
- ***Acknowledges also*** that without major progress in stopping AIDS, global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty, hunger and childhood mortality will continue to weaken, potentially threatening social stability and national security;
- ***Further acknowledges*** that while the churches have been on the front line of care and support for people affected by the pandemic, many have also been complicit in stigmatizing and marginalizing people living with HIV and AIDS by their silence, their attitudes, their words and their deeds;
- ***Appreciates*** the leadership of the African Network of Religious Leaders living with and personally affected by HIV/AIDS (ANERELA+), the Global Network of the People living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) and the International Community of Women living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) in promoting the greater participation of people living with HIV and AIDS in the life of the church; and the convening of the XVI International AIDS Conference on 18 August in Toronto, Canada by UNAIDS that called for a long-term sustained response to AIDS during the next 25 years and beyond;
- ***Encourages*** the churches to continue to play a critical role in overcoming the pandemic through responses that are tempered by compassion and qualified by competence; this includes providing comprehensive and evidence-based information on prevention of HIV transmission and addressing the links between gender inequity, poverty and HIV and AIDS;
- ***Encourages also*** the leadership of the churches to exercise their role as advocates for just policies and to hold governments accountable for their promises;

- ***Calls on*** the G8 governments to adhere to their promises of funding and response to reach universal access to treatment, care and support by 2010; and on the private sector, especially pharmaceutical companies, to invest in needed research and development to respond to HIV (e.g. paediatric dosages and diagnostics) and to ensure that their drugs for treating HIV are available at low prices in low and middle-income countries;
- ***Renews*** its call on churches and Christians to promote greater and more meaningful involvement and participation of people living with HIV and AIDS and to promote and adopt inclusive workplace policies and innovative and sustainable methods of working with networks of HIV-positive people; and to promote and share deeper theological and ethical reflection on HIV and AIDS, and to promote the acceptance by the churches of persons living with HIV and AIDS;
- ***Urges*** churches and their related organizations to promote and share deeper theological and ethical reflection on HIV and AIDS;
- ***Appeals*** to the churches to commit themselves to mainstream the response to HIV and AIDS, ensuring that people are made less vulnerable and benefit from new developments in prevention and treatment and advocating for universal access to anti-retroviral treatment; and to promote open and inclusive discussions on issues related to sexuality, gender-based violence and intravenous drug use to empower individuals and communities to be less vulnerable to HIV;
- ***Encourages*** churches to include women and young people in developing and implementing programmes and policies on HIV and AIDs;
- ***Reiterates*** the need to strengthen the capacity of the churches and civil society organizations and networks by providing adequate human and material resources to monitor and implement the effectiveness of local and national efforts to reverse the trend of this global pandemic, including strengthening support for existing effective ecumenical initiatives like the WCC's Ecumenical HIV/AIDs Initiative in Africa (EHAIA);
- ***Consider*** the convening of a church leaders summit no later than 2008, to be accompanied by a youth summit, to examine our collective response to the pandemic, learn from better practices, and shape the agenda for the ecumenical response to this crisis;
- ***Calls*** for ongoing ecumenical reflection on those aspects of the church's response to HIV and AIDs about which there is continual disagreement. This would include the nature of the church's response to those who, contrary to the church's witness, engage in high risk sexual activity or drug use, including the appropriate means of prevention.

Statement on extrajudicial killings in the Philippines

1. The Philippines has continued to suffer political turmoil since the mid-1980s when people power toppled the military dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos. The present government headed by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo came into power in 2001 with promises of bringing about reform in the political and economic systems of the country. The legitimacy of the government's election continues to be challenged, and under the pretexts of the "war on terror" and a new emphasis on internal national security, the Philippines has, to an alarming degree, become more and more militarized. There are now many calls, including from the churches, for the President to relinquish office.

2. Sadly, the promises of reform have not been addressed, let alone fulfilled. The Philippines remains a country with stark divisions between the haves and the have-nots. Political power is still exercised by a ruling elite supported by the military. The so-called "war on terror" has served to strengthen the hold of the government and the military over the people, as development and military funding from overseas governments is provided in return for the government's support of the "war on terror". The longstanding communist insurgency is used by the government as an excuse for action against any persons and groups who seek to stand with and for the poor.

3. Since 2001 more than 740 people who have worked with and for the poor in the Philippines have been assassinated in extrajudicial killings. They include journalists, lawyers, leaders of people's organizations, human rights activists and church workers. The killings have intensified since 2004. Twenty-one church workers, including 9 pastors and priests, have been killed since 2001. Most of the attacks have been committed by unidentified men shooting from unmarked vehicles or motorcycles. Paramilitary groups armed by the military, and even members of the military and police, have been implicated in these killings. While a few suspects have been detained briefly, no charges have yet been issued in relation to these killings. All cases remain unsolved. The government has allowed these crimes to take place with impunity, and is failing in its statutory obligations to protect the right to life and to maintain the rule of law.

4. In 2005 the National Council of Churches in the Philippines invited the World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia to send a delegation of church leaders to investigate the situation. Thirteen church leaders drawn from ten countries visited regions in the Eastern Visayas, Luzon and Mindanao, meeting with the families of those killed, with groups working for

human rights, with church leaders, and with government representatives. The key recommendations of the delegation included:

- an immediate and impartial investigation of all recent extrajudicial executions;
- revision of the government's military strategy for resolving the insurgency to ensure the safety of non-combatants and to avoid indiscriminate destruction of property;
- resumption of the stalled peace talks between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front;
- assertion of civilian control of the military which must be held accountable for its actions and which must be in accordance with international humanitarian law;
- promotion of agrarian and land rights reform which preserves the integrity of creation and honours the ancestral domain of the indigenous peoples;
- reform of the judicial system to guarantee its independence and integrity;
- cessation of the practice by the government and military of labelling those who work for justice and for the poor as subversives or communists.

5. Over the past 12 months the situation has worsened considerably. Extrajudicial killings have been happening at the rate of one every two days. The government has increased its military action against insurgents, resulting in an increase in the number of "civilian" deaths. The militarization of the Philippines, and the fear of the people, are deepening.

6. While the Philippines government has recently announced a commission of inquiry into the extrajudicial killings, churches in the Philippines remain unconvinced of the seriousness of the inquiry. The churches seek an independent inquiry rather than one made up of government appointees. They propose that the inquiry should be in the hands of a group of esteemed individuals from different walks of life such as church leaders, academicians, lawyers, legislators and leaders of peasants and workers.

7. The World Council of Churches central committee meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 30 August to 6 September 2006:

- ***Condemns*** the extrajudicial killings being committed in the Philippines;
- ***Expresses*** its condolences to the families of the victims of the killings, especially to the families of church workers, pastors and priests killed since 2001;

- ***Affirms*** the Filipino churches and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines for their courageous work with and for the poor, in the face of violent opposition;
- ***Thanks*** those churches and councils of churches in other parts of the world who are acting in solidarity with the churches of the Philippines, especially in Japan, Canada, the USA and Australia;
- ***Assures*** the Filipino churches and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines of the ongoing support and solidarity of the World Council of Churches as they continue to give courageous witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the face of violent opposition;
- ***Challenges*** the concept of a global war on terror as pretext for the violation of human rights in the Philippines;
- ***Calls on*** the government of the Philippines to:
  - disband "death squads", private militias and paramilitary forces operating outside the official chain of government command;
  - hold accountable any members of the military found to be involved in extrajudicial killings;
  - instruct the military to cease listing churches and church workers as "enemies of the state";
  - reverse the national security policy of making no distinction between combatants and non-combatants within the current counter-insurgency campaign;
  - establish a fully independent Commission of Inquiry into extrajudicial killings;
  - invite the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings to visit the Philippines.
- ***Asks*** the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to take up the matter of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

Statement on the war in Lebanon and Northern Israel, and ecumenical action for Middle East peace

The central committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, 30 August to 6 September 2006:

1. *Expressing* shock and profound sorrow at the suffering and loss of life inflicted on people across Lebanon and in neighbouring areas of Israel during the recent war;

2. *Deploring* the fact that this eminently avoidable conflict took place, was waged with illegal and disproportionate use of military force, and was prolonged by the failure of leadership at the highest levels of the international community to stop the conflict;

3. *Recalling* church warnings from the outset on the imperatives of an early ceasefire, that all parties meet their obligations under international law including the responsibility to protect civilians, that all detainees be released or provided a fair trial, and that Israel lift its blockade of Lebanon (WCC general secretary, 13 July 2006) and *noting* that none of these widely supported goals have been met promptly or completely;

4. *Reiterating* the need for churches to aid those affected by the war and to take specific advocacy measures to end conflict (WCC pastoral letter to member churches, 21 July 2006);

5. *Noting* the public call for leading nations to end the paralysis at the UN Security Council, the undermining of the UN Charter and acquiescence in the disproportionate violence over Lebanon. (WCC general secretary, 3 August 2006);

6. *Repeating* the need for all parties to the violence and for the United States, the European Union and the Arab states to exert their influence towards a sustainable ceasefire and then to work for a lasting peace (WCC, LWF, WARC joint appeal, 8 August 2006);

7. *Reiterating* our call to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to finally implement the Council's long-standing resolutions both for Lebanon and for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories because "fault lines of instability now run right through the region" and because "it is no longer credible to act as if segmented or unilateral plans will work in isolation". (WCC general secretary, 21 July 2006);

8. *Seeing* this war for what it was: aside from combatants on both sides 43 civilians dead in Israel and more than 1,100 civilians dead in Lebanon with one-third of them children, more than 4,400 civilians wounded, and tens of thousands of homes destroyed with the vast majority of this destruction taking place in Lebanon; attacks by the Hezbollah militia on civilian areas of northern Israel causing deaths, injuries and destruction; widespread fear and trauma among non-combatants; other grave consequences in Lebanon, namely,

a million people displaced, scores of bridges, roads and runways damaged, and fuel, water and electricity infrastructure destroyed;

9. *Alarmed* at violations of international law on armed conflict by the combatants in this war and by the international community's failure to ensure the protection of civilians and the proportionate use of military force; by the Israeli military's extensive use of cluster munitions in south Lebanon particularly when a ceasefire was already imminent, leaving tens of thousands of unexploded sub-munitions highly dangerous to returning civilians; and by the erosion of international humanitarian and human rights law through chronic denials that illegal and immoral actions have taken place;

10. *Pledging* to respond to the message from churches in Beirut and Jerusalem relayed by the visiting ecumenical delegation during the war to sister churches around the world: "Do not only pray for us - act!" (WCC, Conference of European Churches, Lutheran World Federation and World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 16 August 2006);

11. Churches, other civil society groups and a number of governments are eager to see a radical re-engagement by the international community in peaceful and equitable resolution of the conflict in Lebanon and related conflicts in the Middle East. We share that hope and are pledging to undertake a new initiative ourselves. Accordingly, the WCC central committee:

- ***Calls*** for a sustainable and unconditional ceasefire, and lifting of the blockade of Lebanon;
- ***Recommends*** that churches support the Lebanon appeal of ACT International and *commends* all those who are assisting the war's victims, the United Nations, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, for monitoring violations of international law during the conflict, and the government of Sweden for hosting a donors' meeting on Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories;
- ***Urges*** the United Nations to establish an international inquiry to investigate violations of international law, including possible war crimes, and the transfer of arms used in violations of human rights during the recent Lebanon-Israel conflict;
- ***Calls*** on the governments that supplied arms to the combatants to suspend transfers of arms and related material to Israel and Hezbollah pending the results of such an investigation, and for those who have used cluster munitions in Lebanon to provide detailed information on the locations, quantity and types of cluster munitions used;

- ***Insists*** on the release of all detainees, or bringing them to trial under due process of law and according to international norms, in Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories;
- ***Calls upon*** the UN Security Council to implement the Council's long-standing resolutions for peace in Lebanon and in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including an end to the illegal 39-year occupation that is the vortex of the region's violent storms;
- ***Endorses*** the proposal for establishing a Palestine/Israel Ecumenical Forum under the auspices of the WCC as the cornerstone of a comprehensive ecumenical advocacy initiative on the Middle East; and *calls* WCC governing bodies, member churches and ecumenical partners to enlist energy and resources in these plans. The forum would catalyze and coordinate new and existing church advocacy for peace, be inter-disciplinary in deliberation and practice, and demonstrate its commitment to inter-religious action for peace and to justice that serves all peoples of the region.

12. May we together satisfy the hopes of suffering communities and churches. May we together bear witness to God's abiding love for all people. May a united ecumenical community — in prayer and action — make a new and substantial contribution to peace with justice in the Middle East.

Statement on the conflict in Sri Lanka

1. The conflict in Sri Lanka has over the past twenty-five years claimed thousands of lives on both sides of the ethnic divide. Thousands of refugees have sought asylum abroad while many thousands are internally displaced. The civilian population has been put through tremendous hardships due to summary executions, torture, illegal detentions, embargo on essential items, forced recruitment of children, etc.

2. A cease-fire agreement was signed in February 2002, through the mediation of the Norwegian government. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission comprising representatives from the Nordic countries was appointed to monitor the cease-fire agreement.

3. Since April 2006, there has been a gradual collapse of the cease-fire agreement. Intense fighting has broken out and has resulted in the displacement of 200,000 members of Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala communities. The civilian population in the Jaffna peninsula in the North is unable to move to safer areas due to prolonged curfews. There is a severe shortage of food and other essential items and thousands of civilians are helplessly caught in intense military

action. Around one thousand people have been killed and many others injured. It is innocent civilians belonging to all communities who have suffered the most. In addition, humanitarian aid workers have been killed, severely limiting the capacity of church and other humanitarian agencies to respond to the crisis and to continue vital reconstruction following the tsunami of December 2004.

4. The churches in Sri Lanka have provided cautious and critical support to the peace process, amongst others through inter-religious cooperative endeavours to mobilize people for peace and national reconciliation. The heads of churches, in a pastoral letter issued on 18 August 2006, called on the churches "to maintain close contact with other Christian groups and persons of other faiths in order to build social trust and friendship" at a time when there is pain and agony in the hearts of the people.

5. The central committee of the World Council of Churches meeting in Geneva 30 August to 6 September 2006, therefore:

- ***Expresses*** its deep concern at the widening rift between the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities and the lethal escalation of armed violence between the security forces of the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam and the activities of the para-military groups;
- ***Is appalled*** by the breakdown of the peace process and the cease-fire agreement achieved through years of hard negotiations, mediated through the Norwegian government;
- ***Deplores*** military actions and suicide bomb attacks whose victims are often innocent civilians including women and children;
- ***Condemns*** the intensification and escalation of military violence by the parties to the conflict that is causing untold misery and suffering to the people in many parts of the island especially those in the Northern and Eastern provinces;
- ***Calls*** on the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam to respect the terms and conditions of the cease-fire agreement and put an immediate end to all hostilities and resume peace negotiations without future delay;
- ***Calls*** also on the international community to influence the parties of the conflict to immediately engage in peace negotiations and put an end to the present spate of violence;
- ***Urges*** the ecumenical community to remain in constant prayer for the people and churches of Sri Lanka and to accompany the sister churches in

Sri Lanka by strengthening their efforts towards the restoration of peace and community integration in their war-torn country.

Minute on Sudan

1. The World Council of Churches continues to be concerned and saddened by the ongoing atrocities taking place in the Darfur region of the Sudan. The WCC's executive committee issued a statement on Sudan in May 2006 in which it articulated this concern, stated its hope for the peace agreement signed in May 2006, and acknowledged its support for the UN Security Council resolution under Chapter 7 to "establish a peace-keeping force in the region".

2. The WCC laments that atrocities have continued since the signing of that peace agreement, including a number of events which seem to indicate that certain signatories to the May 2006 peace agreement have not fulfilled important dimensions of the agreement.

3. On August 31, 2006, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1706, in a vote of 12-0. This resolution authorizes the deployment of 17,500 UN peacekeepers and over 3000 UN civilian police to Darfur. In addition, Resolution 1706 seeks to encourage the safe transport and implementation of all needed humanitarian aid to the suffering people of Darfur.

4. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1706 invites the government of Sudan to consent to this deployment of UN forces to aid in the peaceful resolution of this longstanding tragedy. The initial response to this resolution, from the government of the Sudan, has been resistant. Nonetheless, the WCC urges the government of Sudan to give their consent to this resolution, to fulfill their obligations as set out in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and to bring an end to this terrible suffering.

5. Therefore, the WCC at its meeting of the central committee on August 30 to September 6, 2006,

- ***requests*** the WCC to call on the government of Sudan to comply with the United Nations resolution as a way of fulfilling its responsibility to protect the people of Sudan;
- ***requests*** the general secretariat of the WCC, in consultation with the churches in Sudan, to consider the viability of arranging a high level delegation of church representatives and members of the Islamic community to visit and meet with government officials in Sudan, as well as representa-

tives of the Darfur region, to emphasize the importance of this compliance and to offer any help that might be needed in the peaceful resolution of this conflict;

- ***requests*** the staff to study if the use of the term "genocide" with regard to the crisis in Darfur is appropriate in light of the internally agreed conventions on this issue, and to offer counsel to the churches.

Minute on Kosovo

1. Deliberation by the international community on the future status of Serbia's southern region of Kosovo is presently underway and expected to near completion by the year's end 2006. Though Kosovo cannot continue to survive in a state of indetermination, neither can the attempt to alleviate short-term anxieties be permitted to result in dire long-term consequences. The realization of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Kosovo must begin, realistically, with peaceful co-existence.

2. All those who call Kosovo their home must be permitted to return, regain rightful residence, and all must learn, again, to live side-by-side in peace and in harmony as good neighbours. Then, once familiar and comfortable with each other's presence, they must begin integrating into all phases of life, especially in cities, which at present are almost entirely mono-ethnic. This will serve to define the beginnings of a multi-ethnic society.

3. On this basis the international community can implement a sustained effort towards an enduring and just peace, while securing freedom and tolerance in a truly multi-ethnic and multi-religious Kosovo.

4. To that end, we support the leaders and senior representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Islamic community of Kosovo, the Protestant Evangelical Church and the Jewish community gathered on 2–3 May, 2006, at the historical Pec Patriarchate Monastery for an Interfaith Conference on Peaceful Coexistence and Dialogue. The Conference was held at the initiative of religious representatives in Kosovo, hosted by the Serbian Orthodox Church, and organized and sponsored by Norwegian Church Aid.

5. Therefore, given this background, the World Council of Churches central committee meeting in Geneva from 30 August to 6 September, 2006:

- ***Commits*** the WCC to request the religious leaders of Kosovo to form a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to foster healing and harmonious

relations in a society that has been torn asunder by violence, hatred and conflict; and to ask the authorities of Serbia and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo (PISG) and the international community to support the Commission; and;

- ***Commits*** the WCC in cooperation with the Conference of European Churches (CEC) to continue to monitor the situation on the maintaining of human rights and religious freedom, particularly of religious minorities, and the preservation of cultural and religious patrimonial heritage in Kosovo, and in this connection to keep member churches informed of developments and express support for a truth and reconciliation commission.

Joint Report of the Programme and Policy Reference Committees

1. The programme committee and the policy reference committee met in combined session to discuss the draft programme plans of the World Council of Churches for 2007-2013.

2. In plenary hearing sessions and in dialogue with the general secretary, the participants discussed practical aspects of implementation, including the new groupings of programme areas, the roles of commissions, the cooperative working style expected of staff and the process for establishing criteria for evaluation of activities, projects and programmes of the WCC. The rationale for integrating the work of separate advisory commissions, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Inter-religious Dialogue and Diakonia, into one advisory committee, namely the CCIA, was reviewed as not only a response to the financial situation in the Council but also as a new and more integrated approach to work in related areas.

3. Members of the two committees then divided into self-selected small groups to focus on each of the proposed six main programme areas and communications, the programme plans as a whole, and the reports of the moderator and general secretary, specifically as they relate to the mandates of the committees.

Comments on the reports of the moderator and the general secretary

4. Committee members reflected general remarks on each report and reaffirmed discussions at the Assembly that the moderator's address should be visionary, while the general secretary should report back to central committee on work accomplished since the last meeting. Concern was also expressed about inadequate youth representation on the Continuation Committee to implement the recommendations of ecumenism in the 21st century process.

5. Questions were raised concerning the process of coordination with the Christian World Communions (CWCs) and the WCC. A joint consultative body has been proposed, and one sub-group believes that a clear initiative should come from the central committee, as decided by the assembly, to establish this body, working in consultation with the CWCs.

Moderator's address

6. The moderator's address was received with appreciation and its pastoral tone welcomed. His emphasis on religious pluralism, spirituality and the for-

ward-looking theme of hope were particularly noted. At the same time further reflection is needed on the contents, implications and actual presence of hope.

7. Some felt discussion regarding religious pluralism ought to go beyond inter-denominationalism and while the distinctiveness of Pentecostalism, Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism ought be understood, good relationships among them can be highlighted. His report from the context of the situation in Brazil illustrated the benefit of delegates sharing their contexts with the central committee and the ecumenical movement.

General secretary's report

8. The attention in the general secretary's report to the issue of migration was greatly appreciated. At the same time, to have a comprehensive approach to migration, many more aspects need to be developed, and more clearly reflected in the programme work, in the context of the relationship between globalization and the *oikoumene*, for example: the brain drain; South-South migration; human trafficking; migrant churches leading to multiplication of churches and the implications for church life and the unity of the church; outsourcing of industries from the North; migration for the sake of economic benefit and the effect of this migration on the exploitation of Indigenous Peoples' resources; "the gospel of prosperity" and spirituality, and the migration of ideas and its impact on the church.

9. Consideration of migration issues and the "church of the stranger" will necessarily involve integration of programme areas as it includes issues of hospitality and welcoming, of health and healing, of justice, human rights and human security, and many others. Migration and hospitality raise important and related theological and sociological questions.

10. The Middle East priority and the proposal to create an Israel-Palestine forum were welcomed. The need to base advocacy efforts on "moral and theological principles and the thoughtful analysis of the roots of the conflict" (paragraph 12), in the wider geo-political context was underlined. Similarly, the need to maintain the WCC's global coordination of EAPPI was affirmed. The importance of integrating different programmes focused on the Middle East was also highlighted. We have to take into account that the Middle East is also the region of "holy places".

New challenges

11. The statement of the integration of indigenous peoples calls us to examine further:

Various expressions of spirituality;

The recognition of all churches having equal rights and responsibilities within the society (the question of majority/minority churches).

Comments on the programme plans

General comments

12. The organization and style of work presented in the proposed programme plan was affirmed strongly by the committee, and the staff was congratulated on the concept and process. Appreciation was also expressed for the way that language in the presentation also points to seeing the Council's work in the context of broader ecumenical developments and initiatives consistent with the CUV. Further, the committee welcomed the plan's clear commitment to more integrated theological reflection and to more explicit spiritual foundations, as well as the inclusion in all programme areas of people's movements within civil society. The committee affirms the overall direction of the plan, with its clear intent to relate historic "stream" and corresponding staff teams of the WCC to one another, and build deeper collaboration in the whole work of the Council.

13. However, concern was expressed about the capacity of WCC staff to carry out the work of the 80 projects presented in the programme plans. Further work is needed to develop measurable indicators of results as part of the monitoring process. Measurable results should be indicated for each activity and be directly tied to the goals and objectives of each programme and project. The sub-committees found budget allocations unclear and therefore found it difficult to evaluate whether sufficient funding is allocated to specific activities and to priorities of the WCC. ***The committee recommends*** *that mechanisms to enhance the integrated approach be clearly defined and built into the structure of all programmes and projects.*

14. Some lack of clarity exists, it seems, in the audience for each of the programmes outlined in this section. ***The committee recommends*** *that the intended primary audience of every activity to be implemented be clearly identified.*

15. Questions were raised whether the words "programme" and "project" are in fact the best terms for referring to the work of the WCC, with some preference for terms such as "priorities" or "areas of engagement". Concern was expressed that the priority of mission and evangelism in the life of the WCC appears to be lost in the overall programmatic work of the WCC with only one

project area specifically referring to mission. Pentecostalism has been confined to the aspects of unity and mission, but greater recognition needs to be given to the fact that it relates even more directly to spirituality. The word "evangelism" does not appear in any of the programme titles. Concern was expressed about the unclear definition and usage of the term "mission" and about the financial resources being designated for work with Pentecostals and Evangelicals and the importance of prioritizing the work of the Council in designating funds.

16. The committee affirms the rationale of bringing the four advisory groups into one under the name of CCIA and understands the role of the CCIA as advisory, while the task of monitoring and evaluating the programmes is a responsibility of the executive committee. There remains some concern about how the expertise and representation of the discontinued commissions could be retained to have continuing impact on the programme work. Reference to the new CCIA as an advisory body needs to be included in the plans for the concerned programmes. A suggestion was made that the CCIA should be encouraged to follow the example of the Special Commission to work in plenary sessions and in subcommittees when needed.

17. Committee members emphasized the need both to "deepen" and "broaden" the living out of the ecumenical movement in the 21st century. The process of deepening ecumenical life has already been experienced in the work of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation, and this should be clearly recognized. "Broadening" the ecumenical movement depends on a focused and intentional effort and there must be clear accountability for the time and effort, which staff devotes to such relationships. ***The committee recommends*** *that a specific report be prepared for the central committee on how this approach is deepening and broadening ecumenical relationships for the 21st century.*

18. The work of the Global Christian Forum was noted as a major step in the "broadening" of ecumenical relationships today. The Forum has sought to build new relationships between those who have not participated fully in ecumenical structures or the modern ecumenical movement and those who have. The WCC's continual support, as approved by the assembly, is a key example of ecumenical imagination and hope as we look to the future.

19. The committee stressed that relationships with others doing WCC-related work be encouraged in informal but meaningful ways that can lead to fruitful collaboration and avoid unnecessary over-lapping of efforts. When this work is done on behalf of the WCC it should be recognized and expressed in appropriate ways.

20. A concern was raised that the churches must be setting the WCC agenda in all respects. For example, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Colombia are critical situations that do not receive enough attention in the media and so may not be receiving deserved attention from the WCC.

21. The committee highlighted the specific role the WCC needs to play in relation to the UN, and especially called for strengthening the WCC UN liaison office so that the UN Office also can inform the work of the WCC. There was some question as to whether the budget for the UN office adequately reflected the importance of that role.

22. Regarding women and youth, the committee discussed whether the shared goal of their full participation is achieved through programmes with a particular and exclusive focus on these groups, or whether efforts to fully integrate women and youth in the life of the member churches first, as complementary and essential parts of every programme, provide the best way forward. Benchmarks for participation by women and youth could perhaps be included as criteria for evaluation of every programme. Specific attention ought to be given to including women and youth in the "reconfiguration" of the ecumenical movement in the 21st century. Indigenous peoples' concerns should be more integrated in the overall programmatic work of the WCC.

23. The committee acknowledges the positive impact of the "Focus on Africa" for the last seven years, and would like to see how the achievements, lessons learned, and challenges for the future are included in the present programme plans.

24. The Committee, recalling that the Assembly in Porto Alegre received the Statement *Called to be the One Church* and called for a seven year process of discussion among the churches in response to this statement, looks forward to receiving regular reports from Faith and Order on the progress of the discussion (cf. para 33c). These responses may help "towards furthering progress to visible unity of the church and will go some way to addressing the fundamental ecclesiological issues raised by the Special Commission". (cf. resolution of 9th Assembly.)

25. Committee members noted that a comprehensive evaluation report of programmes should be submitted no later than the central committee meeting of 2009. An affirmation was made of the importance of having a more coordinated communication strategy to ensure a more concise image of the WCC and a clear voice.

Specific programmes

P1. The WCC and the ecumenical movement in the 21st century

26. Interpretation of the ecumenical vision of the WCC (P101) and global platform for theology and analysis (P102): The committee pointed out the need for specific programmes of advocacy, given the continuing relationships of inequality regarding the participation of women and youth within ecumenical life. Further, the role of women and youth in the "reconfiguration" of the ecumenical movement in the 21st century, as outlined in this section, should be a crucial point of emphasis in these programmes.

27. The global platform for theology and analysis (P102) was strongly affirmed as a key priority. It was highlighted that theological reflection on the HIV crisis should be an area of work according to the decisions of the 9th Assembly. The committee also suggested that the global platform for theology and analysis include theological reflection on human rights.

28. The committee proposes that Faith and Order, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, and the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, be included in the project's methodology as part of the consultation process.

29. Nurturing relationships with member churches (P103): The committee strongly affirmed these priorities, and the methodology of visits between member churches (such as those which took place some years earlier through "living letters"). However, it was noted that the projected level of spending in this area (P103-03) is very minimal in light of the deep significance for ecumenical formation, and suggests that higher priority be given to this approach.

30. Partnership with ecumenical organization (P104): ***The committee recommends*** *that more reflection about the meaning and significance of a "common ecumenical assembly" be undertaken to develop this possibility.*

31. Finally, regarding the continuation committee on ecumenism in the 21st century, the committee strongly urges that the officers review the proposed membership in light of the lack of youth representation (which contradicts the description of this project), the lack of sufficient Orthodox representation, the lack of any Pentecostal or free church representation, and other imbalances.

P2 Unity, Mission and Spirituality

32. Regarding the Unity, Mission and Spirituality Programme, the committee is concerned that (a) by virtue of its integrative nature areas of work may be overlooked by one or another area, and (b) difficulty of the scope and effective evaluation of specific projects and the work as a whole.

33. The committee affirms the integration of a number of Commissions as proposed at this central committee meeting, while stressing the value and role of the historic Commissions on Faith and Order and CWME. The committee also urges that in all its programmes the WCC be sensitive to and aware of the contributions and insights that Pentecostal churches can bring.

34. The committee recommends to the central committee that:

"Evangelism" be added to the title of the programme, so as to read: "Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality" and clarify the definition and usage of the terms.

Regarding the relationship of the unity, mission and spirituality (P2) and the inter-religious dialogue and cooperation (P6) programmes, special care be taken to include the theological dimension in the work on inter-religious dialogue, and the continuation of joint work, at both Commission and staff levels, on "Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding" undertaken by the Inter-Religious Dialogue, Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, and Faith and Order. The WCC is a fellowship of churches. As people of faith our reflection on our identity and on other religions must be motivated from our faith perspective, and not merely from a political and societal perspective.

Regarding the call to be one church (P201) and the spirituality and worship in ecumenical context (P202) projects, work should be done in the areas of "Theological anthropology and moral discernment in the churches" and "Tradition and traditions: sharing sources of authority", as formulated in the report from the Faith and Order standing commission meeting in Faverges, June 2006 (attached as an Appendix).

Regarding just and inclusive communities (P204): recognizing that these areas of concern (people living with disabilities, indigenous people, dalits, and persons facing racial discrimination) raise questions of justice and require advocacy, this area be undertaken within Justice and Diakonia (P4), and recognizes that these issues have theological dimensions, and therefore must impact reflection done with Unity, Mission and Spirituality (P2).

Regarding the ecumenical AIDS Initiative in Africa (P407): there be work with networks of Pentecostal churches, in order to involve them and to enable them to receive ecumenical funding, and notes that this would be effective because these networks have high impact in local situations.

P3 Public Witness: addressing power and affirming peace

35. Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (DOV) (P301): The committee reaffirms the Assembly mandate on team visits

during the second half of the DOV, and asks for funds to be allocated. It also suggests an integrated approach to team visits, e.g. with youth and inter-religious projects.

36. The committee recalls the decision of the Assembly to have an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation as the culminating event of the DOV and welcomes the steps taken to set in motion the preparatory process.

37. DOV (P301-01c) (Coordination and networking at the UN and at the World Social Forum) should include networking with women's peace initiatives.

38. Global advocacy for justice and accountability (P302): The committee asks that the coherence and potential synergies between Global advocacy for justice and accountability (P302) and Poverty, wealth and ecology: reflection and action (P306) projects be explicitly spelled out.

39. The committee affirms the unique role WCC should have at the UN and the need to strengthen the advocacy work and witness at this level and increase the respective budget. This work would mean both to bring WCC concerns to the UN and UN-related agencies and also to report back to the WCC the actions of the UN and UN-related agencies. Coherence needs to be maintained between WCC advocacy at the UN and the accountability of the churches. (This comment relates also to the Mutual Accountability project (P402)). A clear theological discourse on concepts used by the UN and the international community (for instance, genocide, "war on terror", "collateral damage", human rights) needs to be developed.

40. The work indicated in global advocacy for justice and accountability (P302) needs to be coordinated with other areas. For example, the Convention on People with Disabilities currently before the UN is an area of concern to the WCC and to the churches as is the proposed UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights. The committee commends the advocacy work at the UN carried out by the WCC Indigenous Peoples Programme and calls for the continuation of this work.

41. Human rights to enhance human dignity (P303): In this area, the committee affirmed the urgency to develop an agreed theological basis for Human Rights as reflected in the programme. In the context of the attention given in the project to religious freedom, special consideration should be given to religious minorities, including Christians who are denied their rights to express their faith, oppressed and persecuted.

42. Churches and the Middle East: solidarity and witness for peace (P304): ***The committee recommends*** *that the Israel-Palestine Ecumenical Forum proposed by the report of the general secretary, under the wider scene of the Middle East, should come under Project P304.*

43. Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) (P305): *There was* ***a very strong recommendation*** *that the WCC should continue to be the convener of the EAPPI, to guarantee the global dimension of the programme and to continue to facilitate the participation of churches all over the world.*

44. Poverty, wealth and ecology: reflection and action (P306): The committee suggests to change the name of this project into: "Poverty, wealth and ecology: impacts of economic globalization".

45. The committee draws the attention of the central committee to the following recommendation from the programme guidelines committee of the assembly: "The WCC 9th Assembly affirms that a follow-up of the AGAPE process be undertaken and expanded in collaboration with other ecumenical partners and organizations to engage (1) in the work of theological reflection on these issues that arise out of the centre of our faith, (2) solid political, economic and social analysis, (3) on-going dialogue between religious, economic and political actors, and (4) sharing practical, positive approaches from the churches.".

46. Poverty, wealth and ecology: reflection and action (P306) needs to be shaped in this framework established by the assembly.

47. It was noted that the assembly did not approve the AGAPE action plan, as stated in the project, but that the AGAPE document was presented as a background document to the assembly. The language of the project needs to be adjusted to accurately reflect the status of the AGAPE document.

48. ***The committee recommends*** *that the title of activity "Church encounters on economic globalization" (P306-01) be changed to: "Church encounters on wealth and poverty: impacts of economic globalization".*

49. ***The committee recommends*** establishing a visible connection between the AGAPE process and the DOV international peace convocation and declaration that will conclude the decade.

50. Poverty, wealth and ecology: reflection and action (P 306). The committee noted that Indigenous Persons are the poorest of the poor in every global context. Trade regulations, development of free trade zones, harvesting of natural resources and compliance with structural adjustment policies of the IMF/World Bank have all had detrimental effects on indigenous communities that are caught in the tension between tradition and "development".

P4 Justice and Diakonia

51. *The committee recommends that:*

The name of this programme be re-named "Justice, diakonia and responsibility for Creation", which would give increased visibility to creation and to responsibility for its care.

There be closer, integrated work between Poverty, wealth and ecology (P306) and Climate change and water: caring for creation (P405), that the budgets be re-worked to reflect this integrated approach and that consideration be given to fully merging these projects.

Both of these projects deal with issues of the environment. Although the focus of the two projects is different, the work must be more intentionally integrated.

Project Mutual accountability (P402) be merged into Ecumenical solidarity (P401) under the title "Ecumenical solidarity, responsibility and accountability". "Mutual accountability" is much broader than the activities suggested. Accountability should be an underlying foundation for most of the Council's programmes. Since accountability is an essential component of ecumenical solidarity, these two projects should be merged.

The merged project, Ecumenical solidarity and responsibility (P401), take the following into consideration:

Communications must be an integral part of the methodology in this work;

WCC should facilitate information-sharing on capacity-building initiatives carried out by others to local churches and other partners who may need this support;

WCC should press participants in both ACT International and ACT Development to build capacities of churches working in diakonia.

Project Faith, science and technology (P405) be renamed "Faith, science, technology and ethics".

Considering the link between some aspects of the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network's (EDAN) mandate and the project Faith, science, technology and ethics (P405), the specific objectives be re-formulated to include: "to bring to the table of the science and technology issues raised by and lessons learned by the EDAN network" and EDAN be added to the section on relationships plan.

Health and Healing (P406) include an additional activity to be developed under the title "Healing memories, reconciling communities", which should work closely with the projects and activities: Just and inclusive communities (P204), Global advocacy for justice and accountability (P302), Mental health (P406-03), and

Decade to overcome violence (P301). WCC is particularly well placed to work on issues of reconciliation and healing of memories. The trauma of conflicts is not overcome when peace agreements are signed and many churches are wrestling with their role in healing individuals and communities. Through this deeper work in the area of reconciliation, WCC's voice will be strengthened in the public arena.

Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA) (P407) be retained as a separate programme. The committee affirms WCC's role in this programme and expects further clarification from the 2007 evaluation about WCC's future role and about lessons which may be applicable to other regions.

P5 Ecumenical and faith formation

52. The committee affirms the work of both Bossey and the Education and ecumenical formation (EEF) activities in the life of the WCC and as expressed in the project proposals. The projects, however, did not give the impression of genuine integration, but of two activities continuing side by side. Not enough of the necessary preparatory work for such integration seemed to have been done. Some reassurance was given by word from the former Bossey Board that they welcomed the proposal to integrate the work of ecumenical formation within the WCC. It was noted, however, that the EEF works with institutions that for the most part do not link to Bossey, partly because many are denominational, and partly because of Geneva University's view on academic standards. The regional dimension needs to be considered. Networking differs in different parts of the world, as do resources. We need to ensure the capacity to work with denominational institutions is not lost.

53. The emphasis on ecumenical formation overall reflects the spirit and mandate of the Ninth Assembly, and we welcome that. The "faith formation" element in the title of this programme area and Commission caused some concern. For many, faith is given by the grace of God, not formed by us. The Commission is invited to propose a more adequate title when it meets, perhaps "Education and Ecumenical Formation" or "Ecumenical Formation and Christian (or Faith) Nurture" or a title using the French language concept of "edification in the Faith". The title "Ecumenical Formation" alone would not be adequate, as it does not include supporting churches in developing ways to introduce their young and develop their people in the faith.

54. A number of suggestions are made for the Commission to consider:

Is there a place for distributed learning (including e-learning), perhaps as one of the areas where Bossey and the EEF activities might resource one another?

The experiment in on-line community learning sponsored by the scholarships programme was noted, as was Bossey by Extension.

Could there be more explicit mention of youth and young adults?

Could we make space for exploring how to facilitate and learn from theological education among indigenous people, given the challenge they pose to conventional ways of thinking.

Could we make the most of the 50th anniversary of the Theological Education Fund in 2008 to promote the WCC's work in theological education?

55. The committee recommends that the central committee endorse the following view:

"The central committee affirms the goals on pages 30/31 of document GEN 05, and would see both Bossey's and the EEF team's work as contributing to each goal. The central committee accepts the integration of Bossey and the EEF team, but feels the projects as presently presented do not reflect the intended integration. More time and serious engagement is needed for developing integrated projects, so would recommend that the new Commission be instructed to agree a new project list when it first meets. Given the urgency of the situation, the Commission should hold its first meeting in time to report to the executive in February 2007. A small planning group of Commission members and staff needs to begin work urgently.

56. "Within that understanding, the central committee emphasizes

The priority of networking and resourcing formal and informal educational formation in institutions and churches in the nations and regions.

The importance of making the WCC's work in this field well known, particularly in Francophone and Lusophone Africa and in Spanish-Lusophone Latin America.

The need for an annual meeting of the Commission on Ecumenical and Faith Formation."

P6 Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation

57. The committee affirms the inclusion of Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation in the joint commission known as the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), bringing the inter-religious perspective into consideration on international and global politics.

58. At the same time the committee emphasizes the importance of an intra-Christian theological reflection and particularly the continued collaboration among Faith and Order, Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and

Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation on the document "Religious Plurality and Christian Self-understanding".

59. *The committee strongly recommends that this work be continued, and recommends that:*

Mutual team visits/living letters should be included clearly in the programme of the DOV, and that these include interfaith encounters between youth in order to make sure that the DOV benefits from the experience of youth in peace-making.

The International Convocation on Just Peace include the perspectives of other faith communities, including in the preparation planning, and regional consultations.

The WCC support and advocate for a declaration by the United Nations for a "Decade of Inter-Religious Dialogue and cooperation for peace: 2009-2019".

Interfaith programmes include an intentional dialogue with people of Indigenous religions; and

there be collaboration between the Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation programme and the Justice and diakonia programmes on faith, science and technology, concerning the issue of secularization and fundamentalism.

60. One of the unique roles of the WCC is to facilitate space for broadening bilateral dialogues to a common ecumenical approach and to represent the Christian voice world-wide. Putting Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation as a priority would help the member churches to communicate the programmatic work. Therefore, the committee strongly feels that the financial allocation for Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation needs to be enhanced.

61. The committee requests a more detailed explanation on how diaconal action, political advocacy and theological reflection would interact practically. The committee notes the necessity of sharing experiences, linking the congregations and grassroots of faith communities with the WCC and having the potential to include women and youth, including through direct encounters.

62. Concerning the proposed priority on the Middle East and the role of the WCC as an "honest broker", the committee would like to question this role, as it cannot just be taken but has to be given to the WCC by the conflicting parties. Nevertheless the WCC should strive towards building confidence among all parties towards a constructive dialogue involving Jews, Christians and Muslims.

C1 Communications

63. Communications will help to build ownership of the work of the WCC and build the fellowship, which is at the heart of our understanding and vision, encouraging response, enhancing visibility and strengthening voices.

64. The communications policy of the Council needs to be evaluated and redefined in the light of the new programmatic work in order to determine the audience and the actors before communications activities are undertaken, in order to raise the interest of the secular media and of the world in general, and in order to measure whether churches are quantitatively more engaged in the life of the WCC, and more aware of the work and life of the WCC.

65. The committee suggests that unity and a global vision be kept at the heart of all communications activities.

66. Some ideas for communicating the message of the WCC include touchstones as a way of opening dialogue with people as they express interest or ask questions about the symbolism of the touchstone. Touchstones may be posters, bracelets, T Shirts, pendants. Other ways of communicating include: music and songs, flags, production of sermon resources, DVDs, and petitions.

67. The committee suggests that:

- research precede communications activities;
- a network be developed of church appointed contact people for distribution of information, including a minimum of two people per church and National Councils of Churches;
- timing to allow for action is essential (for example, six months), more if nominations are being sought;
- list-serves news groups be maintained to facilitate electronic communications, at least amongst central committee members;
- new means of communication be developed to reach larger constituencies, taking into account different cultural sensitivities.

68. *The committee recommends that:*

There must be the necessary capacity to achieve what is intended in terms of leadership, staffing, methods, people to whom communications are directed, technology and funding.

A comprehensive communications strategy needs to be developed including inclusion of communication staff in project planning and accountability.

A mechanism to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of communications needs to be developed with feedback being integrated in the communication strategy to continually improve communication. Evaluation of communications should be regularly reviewed by the executive and by the central committee.

Evaluation Criteria

69. The committee strongly recommends that a clear process of evaluation of all programmes, with criteria, be adopted by the central committee. This is important because (1) the early agreement of evaluation criteria assists the planning of programmes and activities, and (2) clear criteria will enable the central committee to monitor more effectively whether the overall goals are being achieved.

70. While each project/programme may have its own specific criteria based on its own goals, it is strongly recommended that some overall criteria should be applied to all work. (This would be carried out through the planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting office described in GEN 05.) The following are suggested criteria, recognizing that these would need further work and development:

- Has the programme met its goals?
- Is it within budget?
- How far has it been inclusive of all voices (e.g., men, women, youth, children, indigenous people, and people living with disabilities as well as the diversity of theological perspectives)?
- How has it strengthened disempowered communities?
- How has it deepened relationship between churches?
- How much has it developed relationships with non-member churches (e. g. Pentecostal, evangelical, and others)?
- How much has it worked in collaboration with partners and wider ecumenical networks?
- How effectively has it been communicated – to the churches and to a wider audience?
- What was the theological starting basis, and how did theological reflection develop during the work?
- How did the work encourage ecumenical formation?
- Were the goals and recommendations of the Special Commission followed?
- How did this work contribute to the visible unity of the church?

71. Obviously, there would be flexibility in interpreting such criteria, since some may not be relevant to every activity. Further, other criteria might be added. However, the committee is convinced that evaluations on all work should be given to the central committee that explain how such clear criteria have, or have not, been met.

The committee recommends that:

A clear qualitative and quantitative proposal for evaluation be brought to the executive committee for approval at its February 2007 meeting.

Budget Considerations

72. Called to be the one church (P201) and the Spirituality and worship in ecumenical context (P202)**:** Concerning project description and project costs 2007-2009, it is noted that programmatic work has been described and is foreseen, but no funds are allocated for this area in 2008 and 2009. *The committee understands this as an error and* ***recommends*** *that it be corrected.*

73. Ecumenical perspectives on mission and unity (P203): The committee notes the imbalance of budget allocations between the years 2007 and the years 2008 and 2009.

74. Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation (P6): The committee strongly feels that the financial allocation for Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation needs to be enhanced.

75. Global advocacy for justice and accountability (P302): The committee affirms the unique role WCC should serve at the UN and the need to strengthen the advocacy work and witness at this level and increase the respective budget.

76. The budget allocation for communications includes a substantial amount for Ecumenical News International (ENI). To strengthen the work of the communications programme of the WCC, ***the committee recommends*** *an increase in the overall budget of the communications programme, as part of the communications strategy to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of ENI as part of the communications programme.*

Editorial recommendations

77. Regarding GEN 05 (Programme plans summary), p. 18, P201, 1st paragraph, ***the committee recommends*** *that the final sentence read: "…sinful and divisive forces such as racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism also challenge their unity."*

78. Regarding the Spirituality and worship in ecumenical context (P202) project GEN 06 (Projects Overview), p. 23, «Relationship Plans»: ***the committee recommends*** *that the first sentence read: "…through common prayer and shared spiritual experiences, bearing in mind the recommendations from the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC".*

*79. Regarding the Spirituality and worship in ecumenical context (P202) project GEN 06 (Projects overview), p. 23, «List of activities», **the committee recommends** that the first sentence read "…WCC member churches, theologians, religious communities, women, youth and Indigenous people".*

*80. Regarding the Spirituality and worship in ecumenical context (P202) project GEN 06 (Projects overview), p. 24, **the committee recommends** that the beginning of the first sentence read: " Facilitating dissemination of spiritual life and worship materials…".*

Ecumenical Chronicle

Some remarks following a pastoral visit from 8 to 15 August, 2006 to Beirut and Jerusalem

Mgr Bernard Nicolas Aubertin, archbishop of Tours, Ms Marilia Alves-Schüller, WCC executive secretary and I returned on 15 August from Beirut and Jerusalem, with our hearts burdened with the discussions and meetings that we had had during our visit, burdened with the expectations of our brothers and sisters of the churches of the Middle East. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you and to share part of this burden with you, so that we may carry it together.

I would just remind you of the four aims of this visit, which were determined under pressure of time while the war between Israel and Lebanon was raging:

- to show ecumenical solidarity with the peoples and churches who were victims in this conflict;
- to give an opportunity to the churches to express themselves and be heard;
- to meet leaders of religious communities with whom the churches have relations;
- to demonstrate strong support for an immediate cease-fire, and the setting up of negotiations under the aegis of the UN to put an end to the crisis.

Here we want to give witness to what we heard from the various people we met, and principally to what we heard from the churches. But before anything else, I think that we need to be aware that while our aim was to be fully focused on that peace desired by all those we met, others wish to do nothing but foster hatred. We must not forget that behind the crisis of which we are the powerless observers there looms the shadow of the Iranian president who has called for the destruction of Israel. While we do not believe this can justify the destruction of which Lebanon has been the victim it can explain to a large extent the way Israel has become set in its defensive posture.

This is why we wish to underline, first of all, the unanimous message we received in Lebanon from both the non-Christians and Christians whom we met, that a democratic, multicultural and multi-confessional Lebanon is not only possible, but is needed to guarantee peace throughout the Middle East. And we heard the Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders in Palestine and Israel echo one another in stressing the importance of the inter-religious dialogue which they have initiated, and the support

which they hope to receive from outside in order to develop it. **Through this message, they affirm that they all want to see Lebanon, Palestine and Israel living in peace, within secure borders and in respect for one another.**

It will not surprise you to learn that we bring with us the burden of the questioning of Lebanese leaders who all said they could not make sense of the number of civilian victims and destruction in Lebanon, completely disproportionate to the attacks against the Israeli army. Their only explanation was that it was a planned action which the statements of US political leaders would seem to confirm. Did not Condoleezza Rice say on the second day of the Israeli offensive: "Lebanon is suffering the birth pangs of the New Middle East."? Does that mean there was the intention to destroy Lebanon? And for what reason?

Arriving in Jerusalem, the Christian leaders whom we met underlined that there is a clear link between the situation in Lebanon and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They all requested us not to forget that this is at the heart of this crisis, and we must not make Lebanon the reason not to concentrate on resolving it.

Thus, we heard the voices of Christian leaders in Lebanon condemning unreservedly the attacks of Hezbollah, which cost the lives of Israeli soldiers and the capture of two others, and condemning any form of violence and the killing of civilians. But the same leaders supported the resistance of the Lebanese people against Israeli aggression.

In Lebanon, as well as in Palestine and Israel, we heard reservations expressed with regard to UN Resolution 1701, not because it tries to contribute to a solution of the Lebanese-Israeli crisis, but because it does not go to the heart of the problem. **The people with whom we spoke are very emphatically calling for a return to the negotiating table, open to wide participation, to build a solid peace for the entire region, allowing both Israelis and Palestinians to live in states with secure and internationally recognized borders.**

There is one aspect of what we heard that we must continue to emphasize. The appeal for the respect of each other was always accompanied by **an appeal for justice:** what does justice mean, when the western media remains silent about the detention of more than one third of the members of the Palestinian authority and of ministers, all duly elected by the Palestinian people? What does justice mean when Gaza is experiencing a humanitarian crisis of exceptional gravity affecting two-thirds of the population? "Do not forget Gaza!" we were told.

Dear friends, we have given to the general secretary a full report of our

visit. Certainly we have to uphold our brothers and sisters who are in distress: but today we have to respond to their expectations, to the challenges they pose to us. We sum up these expectations in a single sentence used by one person we met: "Do not remain content with praying! Do something!" It seems to us that three courses of action should be taken:

- Refuse to be diverted by superficial or deliberately biased analyses that would distract us from the core of the problem, which is the Israel/Palestine conflict
- Put pressure on our governments and in particular the US government and the governments of the European Union so that this crisis will open up the way to peace negotiations from which no party is excluded. And support particularly the churches of the USA and Europe in this action.
- Request our churches to make firmer commitments in favour of justice in the Middle East.[1]

Some people gave voice to the fear that this fresh escalation of violence has sown in the populations of Lebanon, Palestine and Israel. Yet these same people sometimes expressed to us their hope that now more than ever before the world would understand that there is no alternative but peace, and that only the outside world is able to impose peace on people who long for it with all their hearts but who do not know the way forward. That commitment should be undertaken by the fellowship of the churches, and they should communicate this to others. Thus I end this short introduction by a question that is addressed directly to the World Council of Churches and its governing bodies: "Do you have the courage to act?" I know that we are able to respond, but I hear that as a cry for help.

Jean-Arnold de Clermont
President of the Protestant Federation of France
President of the Conference of European Churches
Translated from French

Report of the Pastoral Visit to the Churches of Lebanon, Palestine and Israel, 10-15 August, 2006

From mid-July, 2006, the World Council of Churches and associated organizations had been in contact with the churches of the Middle East to assure them of their prayers and concern at the escalation of violence being experienced in the region. By agreement with the Middle East Council of Churches they decided to send a pastoral delegation to show their concern as soon as conditions allowed. The authors of this report were

[1] We have not mentioned anything about the humanitarian aid which this last part of the war has made even more urgent, particularly in Gaza. This is not something we have forgotten but we are aware that ACT has organized a conference in Geneva on this issue and those conclusions will be more solid than anything we can say.

thus able to make this pastoral visit to Lebanon, Palestine and Israel, from 10-15 August, 2006.

Having completed our visit to Lebanon, Palestine and Israel, the detailed programme of which is attached, we now report what we have experienced and heard, so that the World Council of Churches (WCC) which sent us can learn the lessons and take any action considered appropriate.

The detailed programme lists the people we met but we shall not quote any of them by name in this report. Before anything else, however, we wish to pay tribute to those who made this visit possible. First of all the French government which, by agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defence, enabled us to travel from Larnaca to Beirut on the ship "Le Mistral" and to return by military helicopter. We also thank the Church of Cyprus for its valuable support. In addition, Michel Nseir, who organized our programme in Lebanon with the Middle East Council of Churches, as well as the team of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, who organized our programme in Jerusalem with the active support of Bishop Munib Younan, the Venerable Colin Williams, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, Maria Zoureli and Mireille Gheryani, who remained in contact with us by telephone throughout our visit. To all of these we express our warmest thanks.

We arrived in Beirut on a sunny morning. From the ship – "Le Mistral" – we could see the city from afar. Under a sunny and clear sky one could hardly see that war was going on. Once in the city, however, we started to hear from people and to see the signs of war.

- The traffic in the city is very light. Fewer cars are circulating. There is a shortage of petrol. Drivers can spend five hours in a queue to get ten litres of petrol.
- Fewer people are on the streets. The shops are either closed or up for sale. The beautiful beaches are empty of tourists.
- In the middle of our first meeting there, somebody announced to us that a lighthouse in an area nearby – the next place we were going to visit – had just been bombed.
- Internet materials were shown to us with pictures of Israeli children writing messages to Lebanese children on the casings of bombs. The next page showed pictures of dead Lebanese children who had received the deadly messages.
- The heavy displacement of people was apparent when we visited the schools serving as shelters for people who had lost homes and relatives in the bombings. They came from southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut.

- At 5 o'clock in the morning of 11 August, for about an hour, one could hear the frightening sound of bombs falling on the centre of Beirut.
- On the way to and from Diman we saw three bridges partially destroyed and one completely destroyed. These bridges had previously connected Beirut with northern Lebanon.
- The conflict was on-going throughout the visit of our delegation.

We need to mention briefly the four aims of our visit, which were determined under pressure of time while the war between Israel and Lebanon was still raging:

- to show ecumenical solidarity with the peoples and churches who were victims in this conflict;
- to give an opportunity to the churches to express themselves and be heard;
- to meet leaders of religious communities with whom the churches have relations;
- to demonstrate strong support for an immediate cease-fire, and the setting up of negotiations under the aegis of the UN to put an end to the crisis.

Being the Church of Jesus Christ together

We experienced with immense gratitude the strength of the ecumenical fellowship shown us throughout the visit, the warmth of the welcome given us by our partners in the churches of Lebanon, Palestine and Israel, in the acts of worship which we attended on Sunday, 13 August, and in the mutual sharing as we passed on the message assuring them of the sympathy and fellowship that we were bringing, and as we heard accounts of the situation and expectations for the future.

We felt deeply the pain and at times the agony of those who welcomed us, and we have returned with our hearts burdened with all that has been entrusted to us. As we present this report we request you to join with us in making the responses that are expected by our brothers and sisters in the churches in Lebanon, Palestine and Israel.

Do we actually know how to respond? This is not simply a rhetorical question! It was explicitly asked by various people who wondered whether the World Council of Churches was indeed prepared at the present time to make the necessary commitment to contribute to a real effort to find the solutions to the crisis of which this war is an expression: to exert all necessary pressure on our governments, and particularly on the US government and the Israeli government, to bring them back to the negotiating table without preconditions.

Similarly, we heard regrets expressed that the WCC General Secretary, or

one of the WCC Presidents, was not available to take part in this pastoral visit, which would have demonstrated a firm commitment by the WCC towards the churches of the Middle East.

The situation as described to us

At the end of our visit to Lebanon, Palestine and Israel, we are able to sum up clearly the description of the situation given us by those we met, as follows[2]:

We heard the voices of all religious leaders who were calling for an immediate ceasefire – and we hope today that UN resolution 1701 has been immediately effective and will continue to be so.

We heard the voices of all our partners in Lebanon who could not understand the violence of destruction: more than a thousand civilian victims, crimes of war against children and infants (noting particularly Qana and the Marj'Youn convoy), destruction of infrastructure – and as the Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, told us – "a Lebanon cut in pieces". They could not understand the violence of the military offensive, except that the intention was to destroy Lebanon. We heard also the voices of the same Christian leaders in Lebanon condemning without reservation the attacks of Hezbollah which cost the lives of eight Israeli soldiers and the capture of two others, and condemning any form of violence and the killing of civilians. But the same leaders supported the resistance of the Lebanese people underlying the unity of this country as a model of multicultural and multi-confessional understanding of democracy.

We heard their voices when they asked us to tell our churches and through them our governments, their conviction that the existence of such a multicultural and multi-confessional Lebanon is a guarantee for peace in the whole region.

Their voices have been totally united with the voices of all Christian leaders we heard in Jerusalem, saying how these dimensions are central in countries where all people turn to God and respect themselves in their different confessions. The whole Middle East would not gain from losing a strong presence of all the Christian confessions.

In Beirut and Jerusalem, we heard the voices of all those reminding us that at the core of the Middle East issue is the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There are strong reservations about UN resolution 1701, not because it tries to solve the crisis between Lebanon and Israel, but because it does not point to the root cause of the crisis. So we have heard with special attention those who say that we have to call for the opening of

[2] Note our press conference in Jerusalem, 14 August.

negotiations to build peace in the whole region which would include:

International negotiation with no one left out due to pre-emptive designation as terrorists;

Recognition of the importance of secure Israeli and Palestinian states within internationally recognized borders;

We have heard the voices of Christian leaders recalling that there cannot be peace without respect for the "other", or without justice. They underlined the injustice of the silence of world media about the detention of one third of Palestinian politicians, duly elected – or the starving of the population of Gaza, who each day require more and more humanitarian assistance. "Do not forget Gaza!" we were told.

On some of these issues, we think that we should report in greater detail:

Our detailed comments

The intention to destroy Lebanon

There are three interlocking analyses:

The first is that this was a highly convenient opportunity to weaken a neighbouring state considered to be an economic competitor in the region, in that the reconstruction of Lebanon has made Beirut an important financial centre.

The second is that the multicultural, multifaith model is difficult for Israeli leaders to accept, as they would prefer to see Lebanon divided into three parts: Christian, Shi'ite and Sunni. Church leaders, however, in Palestine and in Israel, state this is a viable model in day-to-day life.

The third explanation is from those who perceive a growing fusion of the American neo-conservatives and the Israeli right ("Benyamin Netanyahou's think tank") with the ideology of the never-ending war against terrorism. This perception has been particularly confirmed by the statements of Condoleezza Rice who said on the second day of the war against Lebanon that "Lebanon is suffering from the birth-pangs of the New Middle East", and by President Bush, when he said that he considered that the axis of evil now included Afghanistan, Pakistan and Lebanon[3].

These three analyses can be combined. They explain why the people we met spoke of a planned war against Lebanon, for which the attacks by Hezbollah simply provided the opportunity.

The imperialism of military thinking

An Israeli we met strongly emphasized this aspect of the crisis, particularly by quoting a statement he had recently heard that: "What cannot be dislodged by force will have to be dislodged with even greater force." He added that "thinking in Israel has to be demilitarized", now that the mass

[3] *Le Monde*, 14 August 2006. Amir Perez, minister of defence, has used the same terminology.

peace movement has disappeared. "Only the various organizations of the anti-settler movement protest, with determination and courage, and speak up, in face of public opinion, in favour of the law and respect for life."[4]

It is interesting to note that the same viewpoint was expressed by the Lebanese we met, who wished to see Hezbollah able to become an entirely political force rather than a militia.

Hezbollah

Christian leaders were unanimous in their condemnation of violence against the Israeli army, however, as we have already said, there is clear support on the Lebanese side for the resistance by the Lebanese people represented by Hezbollah.

On the part of Christian leaders in Palestine and in Israel, while the violence is similarly condemned, they stress that Hezbollah must not be made the scapegoat for the crisis. "The daily bombardment by Israeli artillery and the dozens of Palestinians killed, most of them civilians and many of them children, have driven Palestinian militants to break the truce announced by the major Palestinian organizations, which had been scrupulously observed for over a year."[5]

All this amounts to saying that both in Lebanon and in Palestine and Israel, only a return to the negotiating table to resolve the Israel/Palestine conflict is the response that must be made to this latest crisis.

The desire for peace

We were struck by the question which regularly arises in the appeals made by those we met for a return to negotiations: "Does Israel really want peace?"

That question can seem provocative. Who would not want peace? And yet…

On the second day after the kidnapping in Gaza of Corporal Gilad Shalit, a joint initiative taken by the office of the Chief Rabbi and church leaders, with the agreement of Hamas, to obtain his freedom was refused by the Israeli government who refused to enter into "any negotiations" for the later freeing of Palestinian prisoners. How many deaths could thus have been avoided?

Here again, the ideology of a permanent war against terrorism must be called in question.

Justice and information

We were forcefully challenged by some of those we met on the culpable silence of the Western media over the arbitrary arrest by Israel of almost one third of the members of the Palestinian legislature, who had been democratically elected. There is some ideological inconsistency in extolling the virtues of democracy and then denying it when you do not like its results.

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[4] Alternative Information Centre.

[5] Alternative Information Centre.

In the course of our conversations in Lebanon and in Palestine and Israel, the values of respect for others and for justice were constantly emphasized. People we met look to our churches to be able to stand up for them and to make the specific commitments required by our having relations with the Middle East. Several of them thus requested us to support disinvestment in activities that are against international law or justice.

The Chief Rabbi

It was obvious to us that, while we had come to meet Christian leaders, we should also meet Jewish and Muslim leaders at the highest level. Our meeting with the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Metzger, enabled us to say to him, as we did to all the others, that the community of churches throughout the world stood alongside the populations suffering the violence of war and particularly the 150,000 people displaced in the north of Israel. That was all the more necessary as no representative of the Israeli government had been able to receive us, despite contact having been made with the President of the State of Israel.

That meeting enabled us to express our delight at the existence for over a year now of the Inter-Religious Council of Jerusalem, and at the participation of Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders at the inter-faith conference to take place shortly in Japan, and to sense how much support from our churches abroad is desired for these inter-faith relations.

And now...

It does not fall to our delegation as such to draw conclusions from such a visit. We turn to the World Council of Churches and its Central Committee and bear witness to the expectations of the churches and their leaders. We sum up these expectations in a single sentence used by one person we met: "Do not remain content with praying! Do something!"

It seems to us that three courses of action should be taken:

Refuse to be diverted by superficial or deliberately biased analyses that would distract us from the core of the problem, which is the Israel/Palestine conflict;

Put pressure on our governments and in particular the US government and the governments of the European Union so that this crisis will open up the way to peace negotiations from which no party is excluded. And support particularly the churches of the USA and Europe in this action;

Request our churches to make firmer commitments in favour of justice in the Middle East.[6]

[6] We have not mentioned anything about the humanitarian aid which this last part of the war has made even more urgent, particularly in Gaza. This is not something we have forgotten but we are aware that ACT has organized a conference in Geneva on this issue and those conclusions will be more solid than anything we can say.

Some people gave voice to the fear that this fresh escalation of violence has sown in the populations of Lebanon and Palestine and Israel. Yet these same people sometimes expressed to us their hope that now more than ever before the world would understand that there is no alternative but peace, but that only the international community is able to impose peace on people who long for it with all their hearts but who have lost their way. That commitment should be undertaken by the fellowship of the churches, and they should communicate this to others.

Jean-Arnold de Clermont
President of the Protestant Federation of France
President of the Conference of European Churches

Bernard Nicolas Aubertin
Archbishop of Tours

Marilia Alves-Schüller
Executive Secretary, World Council of Churches
Programme to Combat Racism

Book Reviews

Teresa Berger, Fragments of Real Presence: Liturgical Traditions in the Hands of Women, New York, Crossroad, 2005, 280pp., $24.95

Initially I found the first part of the title itself to be somewhat disconcerting. *Fragments* is a word with such poignant overtones for Third Millennium Anglicans, especially for women as we struggle in the contemporary circumstances to discern how best to cope with forces operating within our ecclesial realm that seem intent on breaking our beloved Communion into fragments of its former relatively unified whole. Mercifully however, Berger was not describing a process of *creating* fragments – rather hers is an impassioned plea for enabling a powerfully redemptive binding together of the already existing *fragments of real presence.* She is looking for wholeness, for fullness of life, for the fragments to be gathered in order that they may become fully visible, so that, *'nothing may [ever again] be lost'*. (John 6:12).

Having been privileged to journey alongside many fine Catholic women scholars and teachers throughout my career in theological education I hear their voices echoed in Berger's work and I feel once again the pain of institutional denial, I sense once more the tears of outrage that such extraordinary injustice (in the name of God) can still be done to women simply because we are women. I recall women's anguish arising from any and all experiences of personal exclusion, the sheer exasperation we feel when our reproductive capacity is determined to be a liability, the profound sense of loss we feel when we realize how few of the prayers and songs of our foremothers in the faith have survived.

By introducing real women who struggle to resist the numerous cultural constructions of docile feminine bodies Berger takes us way beyond the hideous structurally determined brutality of physical and sexual violence, way beyond the sickening limitations of pursuing any notion of an idealized female body image to a place of recognizing that it is not only possible but *imperative* for all who work in the theological academy to illuminate afresh the desperate pleadings and challenges of the Canaanite mother to Jesus. Berger cries out to us all, *"Whether the sentence is in our Sacred Scriptures or not, its truth is right there, in the story of the Canaanite mother: 'Every woman of the earth is sacred to my God'."*

This does not in any way indicate disregard for Scripture, quite the opposite – what Berger is seeking is for the widest and most compassionate possible reading of biblical stories often so painfully distorted by being filtered over too many centuries through male dominated acts of interpretation.

Berger tenderly and yet comprehensively re-introduces the reader to the foremothers of Jesus, reclaiming their presence in the fragile fabric of ancestral relations. She then moves on to a series of honouring chapters in which an extraordinary range of historical narrative is shared and the most poignant and beautiful range of liturgical creativity is invoked.

From Hildegard of Bingen, through the feasts of the standard Christian liturgical calendar, this book is one fabulously rich in resource and possibility for all who would take courage in advocating for women's right to be in and to do liturgy in the company of any of the faithful gathered in God's name.

By weaving into the entire text examples of contemporary women's experiences, from battling with violence of every possible kind, of struggling against terrorism, of confronting ongoing oppressions facing women everywhere, Berger succeeds in constantly reminding us of the awful historical truth of women's experiences of injustice – she reminds us that even as Elizabeth, Hagar, Tamar, struggled mightily against the forces of socially constructed injustice, so too do women today, whether against the ongoing diminution or denial of our God-given humanity by those who insist that ordination for women is unnatural or those who insist androcentrism is the normative basis for all liturgical thinking and doing!

Liturgy is so often alienating *of* and *to* women. This book will provide reassurance to those already committed to gender justice for all women. It will provide wonderful examples for those looking for radically creative liturgical possibilities. It will enable a new rendering of those endless liturgical possibilities yet begging to be imagined into life with gentle love and then nurtured with feisty faith-filled adoration.

O God of all generations,
divine life hidden deep within all ancestral roots,
how I long for you!
From the depth of barrenness
you suddenly call forth new flowering,
a sign of life for all.
Human power is nothing in your presence.
Come, life-giver
free us to flourish,
come now.

This antiphon, which is offered for the day *Six more shopping days until Christmas,* is indicative of the utility of this truly wonderful liturgical resource for all those who would care to give life and voice to women and liturgy.

Jenny Plane Te Paa

Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa is the only lay indigenous woman to hold the position of Dean of an Anglican Theological College. In addition to her work on bicultural theological education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, she has been involved internationally with the Anglican Peace and Justice Network, the Inter-Anglican Theological Doctrinal Commission, Commission on Theological Education for the Anglican Communion and the WCC's Ecumenical Theological Education programme.

Horst Dähn/Joachim Heise (eds) Staat und Kirchen in der DDR: Zum Stand der zeithistorischen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung (State and churches in the GDR), Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003, 272pp., SFR 66.00 / Ä45.50 / GB£ 30.00 / US$ 50.95

With German unification in 1990, the German Democratic Republic, unlike its western counterpart, formally ceased to exist. At a stroke, research about the once-communist state became largely a matter for historians. At the same time, the opening of the archives of the East German state and party apparatus, as well as those of the secret police, the *Stasi*, offered researchers unparalleled access to primary sources, since they were, to a great extent, unencumbered by the 30-year-rule that continued to be applied in the west. And, as church historian Rudolf Mau points out in his contribution to this volume, a major subject for study in this was the role played by the churches; he counts more than 2500 publications related to the GDR by 1995. Initially, Mau notes, this was because of the apparent role of Christians and churches in the mass demonstrations of autumn 1989 that became labelled a "Protestant revolution". Later, the focus was the alleged entanglement of the churches in the machinations of the *Stasi.* In both cases, however, contemporary interests were frequently seen as being superimposed on historical research and this volume of 14 essays is a valuable tool to help untangle the issues involved, as well as serving as a primer on research in this area.

The essays go back to a symposium in 2001 to mark the 60th birthday of Horst Dähn, a West German academic whose 1982 publication, *Confrontation or Cooperation?*, became a standard work in this area. The symposium was organized by the Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research, whose task of comparative research is analyzed by Ralf Rytlewski in the first essay in this volume. The institute itself was founded in 1993 by the two editors of this volume: Dähn and Joachim Heise, who until 1989 worked on Church-State issues at the Academy of Social Sciences of the SED, the East German communist party.

The GDR was the only East European state with a majority Protestant tradition, and most contributions to this book are related to the Protestant *Landeskirchen.* However, Gerhard Lange, responsible for contemporary history at the Catholic archdiocese of Berlin, contributes a chapter dealing with the *Stasi* debate in the Catholic Church, as well as pointing to sources and research about the Catholic church in the GDR, while Hans-Dieter Döpmann writes a comparative chapter on the various ways in which churches in eastern and south-east-

ern Europe are dealing with the past. It is one of the two authors from the United States, Bruce Hall, who writes on the smaller religious communities in the GDR: Methodists, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Mormons and Christian Scientists.

In his own contribution to the volume, Horst Dähn examines the place of the GDR Protestant church in historical and social science research in West Germany prior to 1989-90. In the absence of access to the primary sources, he notes, many Western researchers were obliged to use alternative resources such as the holdings of the Protestant Media Centre in West Berlin. Reinhard Henkys, a journalist who directed this centre from 1972 until it closed in 1991 following post-unification reorganization, contributes his own recollections on the dilemmas facing western journalists – including those dealing with the church – when reporting from the GDR, not least because Western radio and television news were the primary information sources for many in the GDR. Hermann Weber, who helped make the GDR a focus for political science at Mannheim University, places research into the church in the wider context of scholarship on the GDR. Like Dähn, he disputes the assertion that the changes following German unification mean that previous research can be discarded, and takes issue with the idea that the only prism through which to comprehend the GDR is that of the theory of totalitarianism. Detlef Pollack, a theologian and social scientist, and Anke Silomon, a historian, each examine research undertaken in their respective areas since 1990. Robert Goeckel, a US academic who was one of the few researchers from outside East Germany to have pre-1989 access to some GDR archives, provides an overview of Anglo-American research, while Jürgen Seidel provides a contribution from a Swiss perspective, focusing particularly on the influence of Karl Barth on East German Protestantism.

Perhaps the most interesting contribution, however, is that of co-editor Joachim Heise, who describes the constraints facing those in the GDR undertaking research in this area. Unlike his counterparts in the West, he was able – exceptionally, so it seems – to have access even before 1990 to some of the relevant source material. The problem, however, was that of making his research available to a wider public. As he notes in his contribution to this volume, "As far as research – and still more publication – on the history of state policy towards the churches was concerned ... it was impossible to contradict the current line of the SED leadership; the task was to provide historical legitimization for these policies."

Stephen Brown

Stephen Brown is managing editor of Ecumenical News International and is undertaking research on the churches in the GDR at the Centre for East German Studies at the University of Reading, UK.

Gillian R. Warson, *Healing the Nations: Fred Kaan, the man and his hymns*, London, Stainer and Bell, 2006, 115pp, £9.50

I was recently going through some of my late father's papers when I came across the order of service for my induction in 1970 into the team ministry of a group of Baptist and Congregational churches on the east side of Greater Manchester, England. The words of Kaan's Magnificat hymn, 'Sing we a song of high revolt', still seemed particularly appropriate for a post-industrial area dominated by a decaying heritage with islands of new brutalist architecture. To quote another of Kaan's hymns written in 1968, 'Sing we of the modern city, scene alike of joy and stress; sing we of its nameless people in their urban wilderness'. It was a challenge for the churches and their new minister to 'sing Magnificat in crowded street and council flat'.

Later in my journey through an ecumenical university chaplaincy team to being a WCC staff member, I have found Kaan's hymns speaking to the different contexts – 'for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords' or 'there can be no thanks without giving, no words without deeds that are done'. His egalitarian and ecumenical vision of the church found expression in 'The church is like a table' – that is round, having 'no sides or corners, no first or last, no honours', 'an end to them and us'. The plain speaking of his hymns using the lan-

guage of every day stands in stark contrast to the styles of traditional hymnody.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Book Reviews Editor should appoint himself to review Warson's biography of Kaan. What experience lies behind such hymns? Kaan was born in Haarlem, the Netherlands, in 1929 and brought up in a family with a strong social conscience. His parents were involved in the Dutch resistance movement following the German invasion in 1940 and sheltered a young Jewish woman for two years. His experience led him to a pacifist position.

Kaan's involvement with the church began in the final months of the war and he joined the church in Zeist in 1947. He went on to study theology in Utrecht but found it unsatisfactory. In the meantime the Scout movement had been re-established in the Netherlands and involvement with this provided an opportunity to correspond with an English counterpart. As his father worked for the Dutch railways, Kaan was able to travel to Britain in 1947 to visit his correspondent. In doing so he encountered a Congregational church, eventually feeling called to ministry within that denomination in Britain.

As a Congregational minister, Kaan served churches in Barry, South Wales and in Plymouth, England. He had a very clear understanding of the serious implications of being a member of the church. He was concerned to raise awareness of belonging to the world church, especially in worship. Finding himself frustrated by a lack of relevant material in the hymn book he began to write his own words set to a familiar tune. He developed the practice of writing a new hymn each week to fit the theme of his preaching. Warson draws out the contrast between traditional hymn texts about the heavenly city and Kaan's concern for the modern city.

In 1968 Kaan became Minister-Secretary of the International Congregational Council Executive Committee in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva. Following the merger with the Presbyterians, he became Minister-Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Working alongside the World Council of Churches in the Ecumenical Centre brought him into contact with Doreen Potter who had already set some of his words to her own tunes. This led to a rich collaboration in preparing hymns for ecumenical and international occasions.

The ecumenical hymn book *Cantate Domino* had been first produced by the World Student Christian Federation in 1924 and had become the de facto hymnbook of the World Council Churches. The Uppsala Assembly agreed to take on the responsibility for a new edition of *Cantate Domino* which appeared in 1974. Kaan has a significant presence in the book for both his own texts and the English translations of hymns in other languages.

However, Warson tells us that Kaan sometimes found himself frustrated by endless meetings, writing in one of his hymns:

'While people starve in cities,
we travel to committees
until the kingdom come.
We share our high allegiance,
divide the world in regions;
departments are our second home.' (p70)

A sentiment that resonates through to today.

In 1978, Kaan accepted the position of Moderator of the West Midlands Province of what had become the United Reformed Church. At the end of that term of office he preferred to move to work with a congregation rather than continue in such a role. He joined the team ministry of Central Church, Swindon, a Local Ecumenical Project, in 1986. Throughout that period and beyond he has continued to write hymns, often being commissioned for special worship events.

Kaan has contributed so much to the worship in both local congregations and large international ecumenical gatherings. He gave words by which the demands of the gospel could be sung and injustice, parochialism and disunity could be challenged. Kaan is master of the apt but uncomfortable turn of phrase. Warson's short biography does us a service by giving many telling glimpses of the man behind the words.

Simon Oxley

Simon Oxley is a staff member of the WCC and, inter alia, serves as Book Reviews Editor of the Ecumenical Review.

Perry Schmidt-Leukel (ed), Buddhism and Christianity in Dialogue: The Gerald Weisfeld Lectures 2004, London, SCM Press 2005, 262pp., GB£18.99

At a time when Western Christians seem to be particularly smitten with Buddhist principles and have granted leaders such as the Dalai Lama rock-star status, a book engaging Buddhism and Christianity seems like a good way to pique interest and win a wide readership. While it is unlikely that this series' editor had something as banal as book sales in mind, *Buddhism and Christianity in Dialogue* does, indeed, grab the attention of today's religious enquirer. As the publication of the Gerald Weisfeld Lectures organized by the Centre for Interfaith Studies at the University of Glasgow in 2004, the book is a meditation, of sorts, on various issues concerning humankind such as life and death, the Ultimate, peace, etc. A foreword by Gerald Weisfeld, the lectureship's sponsor, outlines his own personal commitment to supporting programmes that foster a spirit of dialogue among religious people. The nature of the lectures (and the book, by extension) makes real that commitment by bringing Buddhists and Christians into conversation about weighty topics.

Perry Schmidt-Leukel sets the stage for the discussions by noting the surprise of Western scholars as they were introduced to Buddhist scripture in the nineteenth century and subsequently realized that many parallels could be drawn between the life of Christ and the life of the Buddha. He briefly outlines the historical interactions between Buddhists and Christians from the early church through contentious missionary movements east in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and mutual misunderstandings that sprang up as a result of such interaction. In more recent times, relations have been marked by a more positive sentiment as theologians such as Thomas Merton and Tich Nacht Hahn have helped to popularize Buddhism among Western Christians. Schmidt-Leukel delineates an imperative for dialogue that grew from the muddled history of oppression, hostility and misunderstanding, and he walks the reader through factors that currently compel Christians and Buddhists to engage in mutually transformative dialogue. He then allows the contributors to speak for themselves as each of the four sections has a Christian and Buddhist addressing a particular topic relevant to each tradition.

In the first section Elizabeth Harris and Kiyoshi Tsuchiya consider the human condition. In this they examine the elevated state of humanity and juxtapose the Buddhist precept of humankind's responsibility for living rightly to Christianity's sense of individuation. Harris refers to the cosmic optimism suggested by John Hick and found in both Christianity and Buddhism to affirm the human condition. Tsuchiya considers questions of death and transcendence as particularly expressed in Western versus Eastern (his focus is often on Taoist) literature using excerpts from Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Chuang-tzu's story of release. In one the individual ego is overcome through the transformation into a butterfly, in the other the individual is trapped in the body of a cockroach. He sees in this a distinction in the approaches to transcendence in Christianity and Tao-Buddhism.

In Part II Karl Baier and Minoru Nambara look at the question of Ultimate Reality in both Christian and Buddhist traditions. Baier begins by examining the Eastern Christian concept of God as something that cannot be fully known or expressed. He draws on the writings of Nicholas Cusanus to highlight this and outlines the Christian "Ultimate Reality" as a God who is self-communicating. This God communicates him/herself through the Incarnation and the on-going work of the Holy Spirit. Yet, one has to wonder how this understanding relates to the Buddhist who comprehends the importance of attaining self-less-ness. If God is self-communicating, and an aim of Buddhism is transcendance of the self, then what does this Christian understanding of the Ultimate Reality have to share with Buddhist neighbours?

Part III sees Perry Schmidt-Leukel and John Makransky engaging questions of mediation and transcendence as understood through the models of Jesus and Buddha. Makransky considers Mark Heim's Christian framework outlined in *The Depth of*

Riches as a model for Mahayana Buddhism. While challenging the system that Heim builds, Makransky applauds his attempt to create an alternative to the exclusivist/pluralist taxonomy used by many in the theology of other faiths debate. Like others in the field, he is uncomfortable with this dichotomy. Makransky also reconceptualizes Heim's model for the Buddhist and agrees that Christians and Buddhists have different goals of transcendence.

Part IV engages Kenneth Fernando and Hozan Alan Senauke in a discussion about the quest for peace in each tradition. Peaceful engagement becomes a difficult discussion in countries racked by war, and both Christians and Buddhists have been perpetuators of violence at various times in history. Fernando focuses on the creative agency of God, the teachings of Jesus and his death and resurrection as models for coexistence while Senauke speaks of activities in the Buddhist Peace Fellowship including non-violent vigils outside of San Quentin prison in Texas. He sees meditation as a tool for peace-making. While one author advocates a stronger sense of community involvement for peace-building, the other focuses more on the power of building inner peace. Rather than being perceived as conflicting strategies, these should be seen as two sides of the same coin.

As outlined above, the topics discussed in *Buddhism and Christianity in Dialogue* are varied and relevant. The structure of each section in the book sees two essays written by the featured scholars, followed by responses to the comments by each as well. In this way, the book models the dialogue that it also promotes. This is a helpful technique as it allows for clarification of arguments and nuanced emphasis as each contributor relates to the other. This keeps the book from falling into the trap of dryness that many published lecture series encounter and makes it a more commendable and balanced work from which any student of Christianity or Buddhism could benefit.

Christy Lohr

Christy Lohr is former Coordinator of the Multifaith Ministry Education Consortium, currently serves on the Board of Directors for the North American Interfaith Network. She is studying at Hartford Seminary where she also coordinates an interactive survey on interfaith education to catalogue what is taking place in international communities launched by the World Council of Churches' Education and Ecumenical Formation programme and Hartford Seminary.

David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (eds), Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, 161pp., GB£45.00

The work of the Irish School of Ecumenics in the pursuit of reconciliation in the Northern Ireland conflict is well known. This book brings together three contributions presented to the 1997 "Boundaries and Bonds" conference, held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and organized by the "Moving beyond Sectarianism" project of the school. It is an attempt to shift the focus from Belfast to the rest of the world, including conferences and articles produced between 1997 and 2005.

The first success of the book is the title itself, because it adequately reflects its contents. The different chapters do present explorations in reconciliation from different religious and country contexts. The purpose of the editors is to show some recent developments of reconciliation at the social and political levels. While the church has mainly tended to focus on the sacramental and individual dimensions of reconciliation, later developments in the social, political and international arena have shifted the reflection on reconciliation to these spheres. Through the different chapters and their respective authors, the discourse moves beyond the individual-social dichotomy and shows how the deep and spiritual contents of reconciliation surface in the political turmoil of Lebanon, Belfast or South Africa, to take three of the situations referred to in the book.

Reconciliation, as a concept and practice, has gone beyond Christian and religious boundaries. This is shown, for instance, in the Handbook on Reconciliation after Violent Conflict produced by the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IDEA, in Stockholm in 2003, and quoted in

Chapter 6. In this new panorama, the book tries mainly to reflect on these new challenges from a Christian theological perspective. But the Christian perspective is not the only one in the book. The first part deals with religious resources of reconciliation. Here Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives are brought to highlight the relationships between reconciliation and other theological concepts such as the stranger, covenant, identity, consensus, justice and compassion. What we may regret in this part, although recognizing the high quality of the three chapters, is the different epistemological approaches. While the Jewish and Christian contributions are explicitly made from within these traditions and from a theological perspective, the Muslim chapter, the longest in the book, is written from a sociological and hermeneutical perspective. It would have been interesting to have also had a theological reflection from a Muslim point of view.

The second part of the book reflects on the dynamics of reconciliation and Christian theology. Here we have the two chapters written by the editors. Liechty analyzes the equation between forgiveness and repentance based on the Northern Ireland experience. Tombs deepens this on truth and memory recovery from the Guatemalan experience, taking into account also the shortcomings, failures and unsolved issues in the country.

Some aspects of the outcomes of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission are developed in the following chapter which opens the third and last part of the book that tries to address the challenges of reconciliation. Wilhelm Verwoerd proposes what he calls inclusive remembrance to grant sustainable peace in post–apartheid South Africa. In the following chapter, Cecelia Clegg tries to shift the perspective from the personal dimension of reconciliation to the social dimension, based on a holistic understanding of the human being as both conscious and unconscious. Recalling the pycho-social dimension of reconciliation, she uses the theological category of embrace, introduced in Chapter 2 by Miroslav Volf, to face the challenge of the relationships among the churches and the phenomenon of exclusion, based on her experience in Northern Ireland. In the last chapter Geraldine Smyth, also reflecting on Northern Ireland politics, recalls Jesus' frequent crossing of boundaries to theologize on right relationships.

As we said at the beginning, the title of the book offers its contents, which is not always the case. "Explorations" refer to lessons learned from practical experiences in different countries and the contextual theology which emerges from them. The different chapters either review traditional ways of conceiving reconciliation or propose new dimensions to be further developed. At the end of the book there is no summary nor concluding remarks. Somehow the different chapters leave the way open to continue reflecting on this topic – reconciliation – which at the social and political levels, has become crucial in many parts of the world.

Guillermo Kerber

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IN GOD'S HANDS

COMMON PRAYER FOR THE WORLD

Edited by Hugh McCullum and Terry MacArthur

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Hugh McCullum, a freelance writer and author of several books, was editor of the two largest circulation church publications in Canada, before spending 14 years in Africa as a foreign correspondent in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe, and in Nairobi with the All Africa Conference of Churches.

From 1988 until 2000, *Terry MacArthur* was the worship consultant for the WCC, for which he planned and implemented many worship services. He has conducted workshops on worship in an ecumenical context, and continues writing liturgy for the English-speaking congregation of the Lutheran Church of Geneva and other organizations.

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